FIRST REPORT | FOURTH SESSION | THIRTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT

Report on the Budget 2012 Consultations

Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

NOVEMBER 2011

November 15, 2011

To the Honourable
Legislative Assembly of the
Province of British Columbia

Honourable Members:

I have the honour to present herewith the First Report of the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services.

The Report covers the work of the Committee in regard to the Budget 2012 public consultations.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Committee,

Rob Howard, MLA
Chair

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Composition of the Committee

Members

Rob Howard, MLA	Chair	Richmond Centre
Doug Donaldson, MLA	Deputy Chair	Stikine
Bill Bennett, MLA		Kootenay East
Mable Elmore, MLA		Vancouver-Kensington
Dave S. Hayer, MLA		Surrey-Tynehead
Pat Pimm, MLA		Peace River North
Bruce Ralston, MLA		Surrey-Whalley
Bill Routley, MLA		Cowichan Valley
Dr. Moira Stilwell, MLA		Vancouver-Langara
Jane Thornthwaite, MLA		North Vancouver-Seymour

Clerk to the Committee

Susan Sourial, Committee Clerk

Research Staff

Josie Schofield, Manager, Committee Research Services

Byron Plant, Committee Research Analyst

Jennifer Ives, Morgan Lay, Gordon Robinson, and Timothy Scolnick, Committee Researchers

Terms of Reference

On June 2, 2011 and again on October 3, 2011, the Legislative Assembly agreed that the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services be empowered:

1. To examine, inquire into and make recommendations with respect to the budget consultation paper prepared by the Minister of Finance in accordance with section 2 of the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act* and, in particular, to:

    a. Conduct public consultations across British Columbia on proposals and recommendations regarding the provincial budget and fiscal policy for the coming fiscal year by any means the committee considers appropriate, including but not limited to public meetings, telephone and electronic means;
    b. Prepare a report no later than November 15, 2011 on the results of those consultations.

In addition to the powers previously conferred upon the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, the committee shall be empowered:

a. to appoint of their number, one or more subcommittees and to refer to such subcommittees any of the matters referred to the Committee;
b. to sit during a period in which the House is adjourned, during the recess after prorogation until the next following Session and during any sitting of the House;
c. to adjourn from place to place as may be convenient; and
d. to retain personnel as required to assist the Committee,

and shall report to the House as soon as possible, or following any adjournment, or at the next following Session, as the case may be; to deposit the original of its reports with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly during a period of adjournment and upon resumption of the sittings of the House, the Chair shall present all reports to the Legislative Assembly.

Letter from the Chair

We are living in unprecedented economic times. Global economic events will present strong headwinds for Canada and British Columbia. Governments around the world who have not been fiscally responsible have been punished. Look to our good neighbours to the south and to Europe – Greece in particular.

British Columbians are fortunate that through years of strong fiscal management the provincial government has rebuilt our credit rating to AAA. The Province is committed to a balanced budget in 2013/14 and has maintained a net government debt-to-GDP ratio of less than 20 percent. To understand the significance of this, Canada's net government debt-to-GDP ratio is 34 percent, in the United States it is 61 percent and in Greece it is 148 percent.

In our travels we found that citizens were optimistic and willing to roll up their sleeves and start working. They want to work with government to create a better and sustainable future for their families. In challenging financial times British Columbians are reminded of the strong role personal responsibility plays in their lives. It is increasingly evident that government cannot be everything to everybody. It takes strong families to build strong communities. British Columbians are also reminded of the great value provided by the not-for-profit sector and by volunteers.

As the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services travelled the province, we heard about a new opportunity that blends well with our government's strong need to protect jobs for British Columbians, and to grow and diversify our economy in order to create new jobs and new opportunities for British Columbian families. This unique opportunity is in northern BC and involves working with oil, natural gas and mining stakeholders to streamline and clarify permitting and approval processes, and working with the northern communities to prepare a trained workforce for an economy in transition.

The provincial government will also have the opportunity to accelerate many northern initiatives, including such major projects as liquid natural gas in Kitimat, gas in Fort Nelson and mines across the north. These major projects will create family-supporting jobs, and will create them now. They will also create major revenue opportunities for our provincial government, in the form of royalties. These revenues take on an increased importance in these challenging economic times.

The Committee feels this new opportunity deserves special mention in this report, and the reader will see a series of recommendations which we believe take advantage of this opportunity. Finally, the reader will see that we have identified priorities for government consideration - items that the Committee felt needed immediate consideration, followed by items that we felt might be considered as budget conditions permit.

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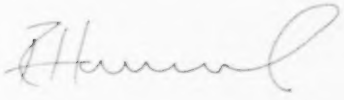
It has been a pleasure serving as Chair of the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services and I am especially thankful to the Committee Members, whose names are listed in this report, who gave of their time to ensure the success of this report. Also sincere thanks to the staff who toured the province with us: Office of the Clerk of Committees staff, Susan Sourial and Arlene Carlson; and Hansard staff, Michael Baer and Monique Gofinet-Miller. They continue to do the work which serves this Committee and indeed this province so well.

Tragically, our pilot during the Committee's travels, Captain Luc Fortin, died as a result of injuries sustained in a plane crash near Vancouver International Airport. We were all very impressed with Luc, his competency and love of flying, and had asked if he could fly with us during our second leg of travel. On behalf of all the Members of the Committee, and the staff, our condolences to his wife, Dagne, and to his daughter Katelyn. Luc's co-pilot on that fateful trip was Matt Robic, who also travelled with the Committee but at a later date. At the time of writing, he remains in hospital with critical injuries, and our prayers and thoughts are with him and his loved ones.

Sincerely,



Rob Howard, MLA
Chair, Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

Executive Summary

The public consultations on next year's provincial budget took place between September 9 and October 14, 2011. During this five-week period, the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (the Committee) held 15 public hearings across the province, including two videoconferencing hearings covering five additional communities. The Committee also invited written submissions and responses to an on-line survey posted on the Committee's website. Overall, some 750 submissions were made to the Committee addressing a wide range of topics relating to budget 2012.

This year's consultation process took place during a period of challenging economic times. The budget 2012 consultation paper identified how BC is in a state of economic transition and uncertainty due to global economic events. The paper pointed out that difficult choices lie ahead if the Province is to fulfill its commitment to return to a balanced budget in the 2013/14 fiscal year. Furthermore, a $3 billion shortfall is projected in the fiscal plan as BC returns to the PST/GST system.

Mindful of the need for fiscal prudence to address these challenges, the Committee has made a series of recommendations based on prominent themes heard during the consultation process. Divided into four parts, the report makes a total of 75 recommendations. Together, these recommendations are intended to help industry grow and diversify BC's economy, while also protecting priority programs such as education and health.

Part One, "Competitiveness, Jobs, and Economic Growth," discusses opportunities to spur development and job creation, particularly in the natural resources sector. Recommendations focus on how to capitalize on new economic opportunities, particularly in northern gas and mining, as well as how to provide necessary support to meet growing demands for community infrastructure and public services. Since significant job opportunities are expected to result from economic growth, the Committee has included recommendations on how to "bridge the skills gap" in order to ensure that BC has a workforce trained and ready to meet increasing labour demand.

Part Two, "Programs and Spending Priorities," contains recommendations relating to demand-driven programs such as health care, K-12 education, post-secondary education, community services, and court services. Under each of these sections, proposals are made to not only enhance and protect key services, but also to pursue innovative best practices and new cost efficiencies.

Fiscal policy and taxation measures are examined in Part Three, "Fiscal Management." This section lists recommendations to revise areas of provincial taxation to grow the economy, stimulate investment, and enhance the competitiveness of BC industries. Part Four, "Other Budget Priorities," includes additional recommendations for next year's budget.

Budget 2012 Consultation Process

On June 2 and October 3, 2011, the Legislative Assembly approved a motion instructing the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (the Committee) to examine, inquire into, and make recommendations with respect to the budget consultation paper prepared by the Ministry of Finance in accordance with section 2 of the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*. The Committee was empowered to conduct public consultations across British Columbia on proposals and recommendations regarding the provincial budget and fiscal policy for the coming fiscal year, and required to produce its report on those consultations by November 15, 2011.

This year's public consultations began on September 9, following the release of the budget 2012 consultation paper by the Minister of Finance, which was issued in conjunction with the First *Quarterly Report*. The consultation process took place over five weeks, concluding on October 14. Once the process was underway, the Minister of Finance communicated with the Committee, expressing his regret for being unable to attend the opening session of the consultations.

Budget 2012 Consultation Paper

This year's paper, "Making your ideas count: Budget Consultations 2012", described some of the government's current and future fiscal challenges. It also contained several questions asking British Columbians to share their budget priorities and to provide input on future government policy.

Fiscal Challenges

The budget consultation paper highlighted economic challenges facing the province, including shifting export markets, the fiscal implications of returning to the PST/GST system, the slow economic recovery in the United States, and the sovereign debt crisis in Europe.

The fiscal and economic forecast anticipated that the outlook for economic growth in British Columbia for 2011/12 will be unchanged from the previous year. The provincial economy, however, is forecast to see slower growth in the next two fiscal years than initially projected.

Smaller deficits are projected for the next two fiscal years, with government committed to eliminating the fiscal plan deficit of $458 million in 2013/14. At the same time, the Province is also faced with increasing demands from citizens for services.

Budget Consultation Questions

Bearing in mind that government has committed to balancing the budget in 2013/14, the consultation paper asked British Columbians six questions.

The first question asked members of the public to select their priorities from a list of five options. The other five questions focused on: the public's ideas to maintain British Columbia as a preferred destination for investment; the measures government can take to help families; the public's priorities

on program spending; how government can create jobs for future generations; and the importance of the Province's credit rating.

Consultation Methods

The budget consultation process took place from September 9 to October 14, 2011. During these five weeks, traditional methods of obtaining public input were combined with innovative technologies to enhance opportunities for public participation. In addition to conducting public hearings and issuing a call for submissions, the Committee also conducted video conference sessions and accepted audio and video digital files – the second year these methods have been used to solicit input from the public. A new webpage was launched this year for the consultation process, and the work of the Committee was publicized on Facebook for the first time.

Public Hearings Presentations

Starting on September 15 and ending on October 14, 2011, the Committee held 15 public hearings in various communities across the province. The schedule included two half-day hearings via video conferencing to hear oral presentations from witnesses in the communities of Terrace, Grand Forks, Nelson, and Osoyoos (September 22) and Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Prince Rupert, and Golden (October 5). No witnesses, however, presented in Grand Forks, Osoyoos, or Golden.

The Committee issued a media release announcing the locations of the hearings, which was posted on the Committee's revamped website on September 9, 2011. Newspaper advertisements were also placed in regional newspapers. All public hearings' dates and locations are listed in the schedule of meetings on page 4.

The Committee heard 220 oral presentations. The arts community, educators, community-based health and social services, businesses, and industry associations were all well represented in this year's hearings. All the witnesses who made presentations at the public hearings are listed in Appendix A.

Written Submissions

This year 118 written submissions were received by e-mail, fax, regular mail, and video. A complete list of written submissions received from individuals and organizations is provided in Appendix B.

On-line Survey Responses

The public also had the opportunity to respond electronically to the six questions contained in the budget 2012 consultation paper. Of the 411 respondents who used the on-line survey form posted on the Committee website, 21 were organizations. Their names are listed in Appendix C.

Results of Budget Consultations

On-line Survey Responses

As in previous years, the on-line survey form was the most popular method chosen by individual British Columbians to convey their ideas for the next budget. While the on-line questionnaire is not a scientific poll, the tally of responses to the first question in the budget 2012 consultation paper shows these citizens' priorities:

- Protect priority programs like health care and education? (350 responses)
- Find further efficiencies in other areas of service delivery? (124 responses)
- Hold the line on public sector wage increases? (99 responses)
- Find new ways to support private sector job creation? (107 responses)
- Increase revenue through other measures? (113 responses)

All Submissions

Presenters at the public hearings, organizations making written submissions, and survey respondents all had a range of ideas on the other five questions in the budget consultation paper:

- How can we maintain BC as a preferred destination for investment?
- With current fiscal challenges, what measures can government take to help families?
- What programs and spending are your priorities?
- How do we create the jobs future generations will depend on?
- How important is our credit rating?

The input received by the Committee is summarized in four parts, beginning with submissions suggesting ways to enhance the competitiveness of the provincial economy, particularly in the natural resources sector. A summary of this input is presented next, followed by respondents' program priorities, views on fiscal management, and their other budget priorities.

Meetings Schedule

July 21, 2011	Organization Meeting	Victoria
September 15, 2011	Public Hearing	Vancouver
September 19, 2011	Public Hearing	Fort Nelson
September 20, 2011	Public Hearing	Smithers
September 20, 2011	Public Hearing	Prince George
September 21, 2011	Public Hearing	Williams Lake
September 21, 2011	Public Hearing	Kamloops
September 22, 2011	Public Hearing	Courtenay
September 22, 2011	Videoconferencing hearing Terrace and Nelson	Victoria
October 5, 2011	Videoconferencing hearing Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, and Prince Rupert	Victoria
October 7, 2011	Public Hearing	Victoria
October 11, 2011	Public Hearing	Surrey
October 12, 2011	Public Hearing	Chilliwack
October 12, 2011	Public Hearing	Cranbrook
October 13, 2011	Public Hearing	Kelowna
October 14, 2011	Public Hearing	Richmond
October 19, 2011	Deliberations	Victoria
October 26, 2011	Deliberations	Victoria
October 31, 2011	Deliberations	Victoria
November 2, 2011	Deliberations	Victoria
November 7, 2011	Deliberations Adoption of Report	Vancouver

Part 1: Competitiveness, Jobs, and Economic Growth – Maximizing Opportunities in the Natural Resources Sector

The Committee received a significant number of submissions during the consultation process on topics relating to the provincial natural resources sector. During public hearings in northern communities in particular, industry groups, businesses, and local governments spoke about the need to maximize the opportunities presented by mining and the oil and gas sector. Specific opportunities were identified to improve delays in permitting processes and to provide greater clarity about First Nations consultation requirements. Seizing these opportunities, the Committee heard, would help to attract investment and to protect and create jobs for future generations.

Other submissions pointed out significant opportunities for investment in northern development and infrastructure. The Committee heard about the potential for oil and gas development in the northeast, and how Fort Nelson is positioned to become a key service centre for the area. The Committee received specific requests for government to assist the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality in developing community infrastructure to meet growing needs.

Lastly, the Committee heard suggestions from business organizations and key stakeholders in the agriculture sector on how to promote and invest in BC's agricultural products.

Streamlining Permitting Processes and Regulations

The Committee was made aware of the permitting backlog and how a slow approval process stifles investment and imposes costs on both companies and the provincial government. Submissions from the mining industry voiced frustration with lengthy permitting delays and stressed the need for an effective, efficient, and transparent permitting process. Here is a sample of what was said:

> *"Right now we do not have an efficient permitting process, and in a competitive investment world, it's critical in order to attract the global investors."* (Gavin Dirom, Association for Mineral Exploration British Columbia, Vancouver public hearing)

> *"We really believe that in order to realize some of the potential in our province with respect to mineral resource development, we need to see some renewed investment in terms of people and resources to make sure our applications can get reviewed and addressed in a timely manner."* (Ben Chalmers, Mining Association of British Columbia, Vancouver public hearing)

> *"One project, one process – that's an excellent objective, in theory, as it affects companies submitting their notices of work and various permit applications. But in practice, it's not working. The processes are awkward and time-consuming, and there is a shortage of skilled, experienced staff to process the permits."* (Christine Ogryzlo, Smithers Exploration Group, Smithers public hearing)

"We urge the Committee to advocate to ensure that resource ministries are funded to allow them to clear away any backlog requests for services by the end of the year. We believe that permits and other service processes are being slowed down simply by the lack of staff in a large number of the resource industries. We believe that this could, in effect, increase revenues." (Darryl Walker, BC Government and Service Employees Union, Victoria public hearing)

Consultation with First Nations

The Committee was also told that there needs to be greater understanding with respect to consultation with First Nations regarding projects planned in traditional First Nations territories. Imperial Metals Corp., for example, asked that government be explicit in determining the level of consultation necessary, the process and timelines, and the division of responsibility between the Crown and industry. The BC First Nations Energy and Mining Council's written submission to the Committee also requested changes to the process. Here are some excerpts:

"We need to be told explicitly what's being delegated to us, and the courts have said this. We need to be told how long it's going to take, what we should do so we can help the government fulfill its obligation to consult." (Byng Giraud, Imperial Metals Corp., Cranbrook public hearing)

"I think we need to think about collectively having some kind of matrix that sort of sets out the various degrees of intensity of First Nations consultation and accommodation that's required and, if necessary, test those in the courts to get some certainty around what's required, given specific case examples." (Tim McEwan, Initiatives Prince George Development Program Corporation, Prince George public hearing)

"A wide range of expertise and experience is required to reach resource agreements which satisfy the objectives of First Nations and industry. Providing First Nations timely access to an experienced team of experts, can significantly improve negotiations between proponents and First Nations and facilitate timely conclusion of fair industry standard agreements." (Dave Porter, BC First Nations Energy and Mining Council, Written submission)

Trucking Regulations and Permitting Delays

In Fort Nelson, the Committee learned about truckers' concerns with regulations and permitting delays. Radar Road Transport, a family-owned trucking business serving the oil and gas industry, explained that BC's trucking regulations lag behind those in Alberta – particularly those concerning overweight trucking guidelines, legal axle weights and measures, and scale systems. Other requests were made that BC support moves to synchronize BC's trucking regulations with those in Alberta, and to streamline BC's system for issuing permits at border crossings by shortening the wait times to access the toll-free line.

Bridging the Skills Gap

The 2012 budget consultation paper asked British Columbians how good-paying jobs could be created. Numerous submissions suggested ways in which employment could be enhanced by forging stronger links between skills training and current and future labour market needs. Representatives from BC's colleges and universities, along with businesses and individual citizens, all highlighted the need to prepare a workforce in transition. Furthermore, the Committee heard how, particularly in the north, there is a serious shortage of local training opportunities targeted towards regional and trades employment, especially since some regions are struggling to attract and retain permanent residents. It was suggested that changes to current requirements for recruiting foreign workers could help to address the needs of some regions.

Apprenticeship Opportunities

The value and necessity of apprenticeship programs was stressed in several public hearing presentations and in on-line survey responses. Currently, the BC Training Tax Credit offers refundable tax credits to employers who hire apprentices enrolled in apprenticeship programs administered through the Industry Training Authority, and provides registered apprentices with personal income tax credits. Submissions from the construction industry, school boards, and the public called for greater incentives to create more apprenticeship opportunities. Here is a sample of their ideas:

> *"We support making the apprenticeship job creation tax credit a true incentive."* (Jack Davidson, BC Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association, Chilliwack public hearing)

> *"We feel that if an equitable distribution of Industry Training Authority skills funding were allocated to schools that offer apprenticeships (in comparison to postsecondary institutions), we could offer a variety of apprenticeship options to Sunshine Coast students. … This investment in graduating students from grade 12 with a marketable trade, especially with an oncoming labour shortage, is immeasurable."* (Silas White, Board of Education, School District #46 - Sunshine Coast, Written submission)

> *"How do we create the jobs future generations will depend on? Invest more money into apprenticeship programs. Practical experience coupled with curriculum is a great way to develop well-rounded employees."* (Margot Staples, Kaslo, On-line survey)

Trades Training

A strong message was heard from provincial organizations representing colleges and local chambers of commerce about the importance of trades training. Submissions highlighted the need to create and fund innovative trades training opportunities to address local and regional market demands. The following quotes provide a sample of public input on this topic:

> *"Trades training is absolutely important, and post-secondary institutions play a critical role. Our institutions deliver over 90 percent of trades training in BC, so our input is important in making that system work effectively."* (Cindy Oliver, Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC, Richmond public hearing)

> *"It is clear that colleges are going to play a key role in training and educating the workers needed in BC. Government needs to create, implement, and fund an action plan now to ensure that business and industry will have a well-educated and highly skilled workforce. In order to meet demand, it's important to work together to increase participation and completion rates, especially for immigrants and Aboriginal learners."* (Jim Reed, BC Colleges, Victoria public hearing)

> *"The government needs to consider BC's fastest-growing population group, Aboriginal people, as a significant source of future labour. An investment in continued support in the area of essential skills training is imperative."* (Susan Tatoosh, Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, Vancouver public hearing)

Region-specific Employment Information and Training

The Committee received several requests to foster greater links between skills training and regional labour market needs. Particularly in the northwest and northeast regions of BC, improvements can be made to ensure that young people are both made aware of local employment opportunities and provided with affordable training opportunities to meet these labour market needs. The Committee heard how, by providing such opportunities through regional colleges and universities, local residents will be more likely to remain in their region. Here is a sample of the input we received:

> *"The thrust for trades training should be aimed on a regional basis, because it doesn't make sense to send people halfway across the province to be trained and then come back, because they might not."* (Roger Solly, Williams Lake and District Chamber of Commerce, Williams Lake public hearing)

> *"More training centres in the north for the north would be greatly appreciated. I know that Northwest Community College got a huge grant to build a new campus here in Smithers. It looks great and everything else, but I keep hearing that they didn't get any operating funds to offer the courses that they could provide in this new building."* (George Whitehead, Smithers and District Chamber of Commerce, Smithers public hearing)

> *"We recommend that the education of physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and speech-language pathologists in all of our universities be augmented or increased. But in particular … I really urge you to get the training occurring in the north. If we train our practitioners in the north, then we'll be able to keep them."* (Margaret Warcup, Kitimat and Bulkley Valley Child Development Centre Societies, Smithers public hearing)

Trades Training Equipment

Several submissions to the Committee emphasized the need for equipment upgrades for trades training. Upgrades and new investments in state-of-the-art equipment and technologies, it was noted, are essential to producing trained graduates who are prepared to enter and to be productive in the workplace. Here is a sample of comments received in this area:

> *"Many of our students are learning with outdated equipment and technology, which makes providing a skilled job-ready workforce challenging. This is especially evident in the trades programs. As northerners, we are greatly concerned with how we will provide local workers with the opportunities that will undoubtedly come their way."* (Dave O'Leary, Northwest Community College, Smithers public hearing)

> *"Students need to keep pace with the dramatic changes to new technology and equipment to adequately prepare for employment."* (Mike Dion, Selkirk College, Nelson video conference session)

> *"At some institutions, programs need capital upgrades to remain current, such as at Selkirk College, where the archaic equipment millwright students are trained on is no longer even used in the industry."* (Zachary Crispin, Canadian Federation of Students – BC Office, Richmond public hearing)

Provincial Nominee Program

The Committee heard several presentations from both small businesses owners and construction industry associations calling for changes to the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) to address local and regional labour shortages. For example, a Canadian Tire owner in Fort St. John reported that foreign workers are desperately needed in that region. Construction industry representatives similarly recommended that the Province work with the federal government to improve foreign worker mobility as a way to address BC's present and future labour needs. Here is a sample of what was said:

> *"I urge the government to establish a regional provincial nominee program for northeast BC, similar to the program currently used in Yukon. Such a program would allow us to identify our candidates and submit them for entry into Canada directly to a PNP process group, bypassing the current labour market opinion (LMO) and Service Canada process. Canadian Immigration would then approve applicants for permanent residency status."* (Ross Bannerman, Fort St. John video conference session)

> *"Given the predicted levels of growth in the industry and the difficulties anticipated in recruiting a sufficient number of domestic workers, the BC Construction Association believes that temporary and permanent immigration could assist in augmenting the supply of construction labour in Canada. The Province however, should reinforce their commitment to this solution and commit additional resources to bolster the Provincial Nominee Program to ensure both employers and immigrants have timely access to the Provincial Nominee Program."* (Manley McLachlan, British Columbia Construction Association, Victoria public hearing)

"In respect of jobs, we believe there should be continued investment in training the workers of the skilled workforce; that there should be as much attention paid as possible to the mobility of workers across provincial borders so that workers will be inclined and interested in working here. Also, there needs to be a good relationship with federal government departments with respect to the mobility of incoming workers, immigration, and, if necessary, temporary foreign workers, so this is done in a correct and judicious manner." (Paul de Jong, Progressive Contractors Association of Canada, Surrey public hearing)

NWC School of Exploration and Mining

At the Smithers public hearing, the Committee heard about the highly successful Northwest Community College's School of Exploration and Mining. The school, in partnership with the Smithers Exploration Group and First Nations communities, delivers programs to produce skilled graduates to work in the local mining sector. The Committee was told that an annual funding commitment is needed from the Province to ensure the sustainability of the school, in the order of $500,000 annually for five years.

Mineral Exploration

At the public hearings in Vancouver and Smithers, the Committee was told about the importance of collecting and providing geoscience data to attract investment and long-term natural resource development projects to BC. Representatives from the Association for Mineral Exploration and the Smithers Exploration Group voiced support for the BC Geological Survey and for the work of regional geologists. The Committee was encouraged to recommend that funding be provided to allow regional geologists to continue fieldwork necessary for exploration, managing relationships with First Nations, and providing mining companies with expert information.

The Committee also heard support for continued funding of Geoscience BC – a non-profit applied geoscience organization focused on attracting mineral and oil and gas exploration to BC. Both industry representatives and the Prince George Chamber of Commerce lauded previous government investments allowing Geoscience BC to continue operating until 2014. A presentation by Geoscience BC outlined current and future projects to be undertaken up to their end-date, including studies on the environmental impact of gas development and research on geothermal energy.

Investing in Northern Development

The Committee heard a range of requests from northern businesses, local governments, and citizens on the need to invest in the development of northern regions of the province. Specific requests were made to enhance electricity lines to industry in remote areas; to develop rail, port, and road infrastructure; and to support the construction of a centre-line road into the Horn River basin, the site of a major shale gas development. Significant opportunities for development of Fort Nelson as a key service centre for local industry were also identified.

Northwest Transmission Line Extension

The Northwest Transmission Line (NTL) is an approximately 344-kilometre, 287 kilovolt transmission line designed to provide electricity for future industrial developments and clean power projects in northwest BC. The Committee heard how the line to Bob Quinn Lake, scheduled to be completed in fall 2012, has been a boost for the north, and that an extension of the line beyond that point will further stimulate additional development. Noting that industry is prepared to contribute, representatives from Imperial Metals Corp. encouraged the Committee to recommend that BC Hydro commence discussions with industry on how to extend the line further north.

Agricultural Land Reserve Boundaries

The Committee heard requests to revise the boundaries of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Businesses and residents, particularly in rural areas in the northeast, called for a review of designated ALR lands in their area. Some submissions proposed that land use decision-making authority be transferred from the Agricultural Land Commission to local governments, as in Alberta. Here is sample of what was said:

> *"Our local governments are quite capable of administering the land base east of the Rockies and the Agricultural Land Commission would be more effective and demonstrate better financial austerity if it were focused on the south, where there is some pressure on the agricultural land base."* (Dan McLeod, Citizens for Agriculture Land Reform, Dawson Creek video conference session)

> *"How can we maintain BC as a preferred destination for investment? Get rid of ineffective governing bodies when there are local ones in place. We do not need the Agricultural Land Commission when we have the Peace River Regional District. The Agricultural Land Commission chases small business to Alberta."* (Colleen Patterson, Dawson Creek, On-line survey)

> *"Allow entrepreneurs to operate oilfield service companies on their properties in northern BC without restriction from the Agricultural Land Commission."* (Mary Miller, Rolla, On-line survey)

Railway and Port Infrastructure

The importance of ensuring adequate transportation infrastructure and supply chain networks for exporting natural resources, such as metallurgical coal to destination markets, was raised in several submissions to the Committee. In particular, it was noted that enhancements to railway and port infrastructure increase exporting capacity from interior regions to ports in the northwest and the lower mainland. Here are some of the comments we received:

> *"Sustained infrastructure investments will ensure the Prince Rupert Port continues to serve its integral role in Canada's Asia Pacific Gateway and Corridor Initiative, unlocking billions of dollars in private sector investment and related employment opportunities. Continued and increased support of Pacific Gateway strategic planning and marketing initiatives will enable this Canadian 'success story' to generate a ripple effect around the globe."* (Ken Veldman, Prince Rupert Port Authority, Written submission)

"The recently announced expansion of the rail facilities in Prince Rupert with some government support is an example of strategic investing. Goods can enter the central US faster from Prince Rupert than from Long Beach, California. This is a good example of us taking advantage of a competitive situation." (Bill Carruthers, Williams Lake public hearing)

"How can we maintain BC as a preferred destination for investment? Continue to enhance infrastructure including … port authorities and railways." (Kevin Kilpatrick, Victoria, On-line survey)

Horn River Basin Access Road

Located in northeast BC, the Horn River basin is the location of a shale gas development with potential to become Canada's first large-scale shale gas operation. At the Fort Nelson public hearing, the Committee was told that the Sierra Yoyo Desan Road (SYD), the main road into the basin, needs upgrades and continual maintenance to ensure that business can safely access the region. The Horn Rivers Producers Group, an organization representing ten oil and gas companies, specifically requested that a central access road be built, with contributions from industry, to improve access and travel times to the basin.

Community Infrastructure in Fort Nelson

In Fort Nelson, the Committee heard about the burgeoning shale gas industry and how Fort Nelson has the opportunity to become a major service centre for projects in the nearby Horn River, Liard, and Cordova developments. Representatives from the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality and the local chamber of commerce spoke about the impact of industry development on the community, stressing the need to improve community infrastructure and public services to meet growing demand. For example, they pointed out that greater access to lands in the Agricultural Land Reserve would allow Fort Nelson to expand to accommodate growth pressures. It was also proposed that a program equivalent to the Fair Share program in the Peace River Regional District be initiated in the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality to assist the community in financing long-term growth.

Additional recommendations called for a regional economic strategy and implementation plan to be developed in collaboration with industry, First Nations, and the regional municipality, one that includes an economic monitoring system for the regional municipality. The Committee also heard about growing requirements for public services such as health, education, and safety in Fort Nelson. It was suggested a strategy be developed to address increasing demand. Here is a sample of the input:

"Fort Nelson is standing on the edge of probably one of the biggest booms in industry that this province has ever seen. It's something that will be very beneficial for Fort Nelson, the Northern Rockies, BC, and Canada. But we cannot bear the cost ourselves. We're working with infrastructure that was laid back in the '50s and '60s. Things have changed. Of course, we look at the town across the Alberta border there, and we compare ourselves somewhat to what they're doing. We won't be as big as that, but it was proven over there that industry first and infrastructure second does not work." (Bill Streeper, Northern Rockies Regional Municipality, Fort Nelson public hearing)

"The businesses and residents of the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality should not bear the cost of the development of the infrastructure needed to support the gas industry. The expenses for those supports should come from royalties before they go into the general provincial revenue. In order to meet the growing needs of industry, we require the development of infrastructure to meet the demands of an increase in residences and businesses." (David Milner, Fort Nelson and District Chamber of Commerce, Fort Nelson public hearing)

Promoting BC Agriculture

Organizations representing BC's agricultural sector participated in the budget consultation process. Their submissions to the Committee proposed ways to expand programs to market BC agricultural products, and to enhance the consumption of BC foods through the BC School Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program. The negative impact of invasive plants on agriculture was also raised, and proposals were made to provide funding for the control of invasive species.

Branding Program for BC Products

Some submissions stated that additional investment in domestic market development and promotion will help to increase the market share of provincially-grown food. The Committee also heard how the creation of a BC brand was recommended in the government's 2008 report, *British Columbia Agriculture Plan: Growing a Healthy Future for BC Families.*

Buy BC and BC School Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program

The Committee heard other suggestions on ways to expand the market for BC farm products. In addition to calling for the implementation of the Buy BC program, the BC Fruit Growers' Association urged the Committee to recommend funding so that the BC School Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program is applied to all schools throughout the province. Currently 1,266 public and First Nations schools participate in the program.

Invasive Species

At the Cranbrook public hearing, the Committee heard about the negative impact of invasive plants on provincial range land, tourism, and regional biodiversity. The East Kootenay Invasive Plant Council called for all provincial ministries responsible for invasive plant control in their jurisdictions to contribute regular, multi-year funding to regional weed committees. These regional weed committees, it was stated, have the structure, expertise, and resources to provide highly-effective control of invasive weeds.

Conclusions

During the course of the budget consultation process, it became apparent to Committee Members that significant opportunities exist for development in the natural resources sector, particularly in the north. Seizing on these economic-growth opportunities will provide new revenue streams for the Province through royalties, as well as create new jobs and opportunities for families in British Columbia.

Accordingly, the Committee has made several high priority recommendations on how to maximize the potential of our natural resources, beginning with proposals to work with oil, natural gas, and mining stakeholders to streamline and clarify permitting processes and regulations. The Committee welcomes government's recent investment of $24 million to address delays in approvals and permits, and encourages continued efforts in this area.

Eight recommendations are also included on how to "bridge the skills gap." These urge government to take action to ensure that training opportunities are available to match and prepare British Columbians with current and future employment opportunities.

The Committee also believes that the potential exists to accelerate specific northern initiatives, particularly around Fort Nelson, which is positioned to become a service centre for the burgeoning shale gas industry. Accordingly, the Committee has made recommendations to provide the community with the necessary resources to ensure that local infrastructure can accommodate new industrial growth.

As well, the Committee acknowledges the importance of BC's agricultural sector and has included three recommendations to enhance and protect BC's agricultural resources.

Recommendations

In the following list, recommendations identified with an asterisk (1-6, 12-13, and 20) are identified as needing immediate consideration by government. The other recommendations should be considered as budget conditions permit.

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Streamlining Permitting Processes and Regulations

1. Develop and implement an effective, efficient, and transparent permitting review process, and ensure that government agencies have sufficient resources.*
2. Provide more certainty to business applicants about what is expected from them with regard to First Nations consultations and clarify what government takes responsibility for.*
3. Consider synchronizing Alberta and BC trucking regulations to permit wide and heavier loads (e.g. axle weights) and improve wait times for issuing permits.*

Bridging the Skills Gap

4. Work with all sectors and the Industry Training Authority to enhance and target apprenticeship opportunities.*
5. Emphasize the development of innovative programs with high schools, colleges, industry, and labour that can successfully recruit and train students who may not be able to finish high school requirements for trades training in a traditional system; and increase efforts in trades training for women, Aboriginal people, older and disabled workers.*

6. In recognition of the impending shortage of educated and skilled workers, work with industries in the Northeast and Northwest regions, and regional colleges to work effectively together to ensure there is accurate and well-publicized local market information for young people and flexible, responsive training programs at a cost students can afford.*

7. Finance a capital campaign in partnership with resource-based industries specifically targeted at the colleges with trades programs to ensure that graduates are trained on state-of-the-art industrial equipment and that they graduate work-ready and productivity-ready.

8. Negotiate with the federal government to expand the Provincial Nominee Program to meet the province's labour market demands.

9. Provide core funding to the Northwest Community College's award-winning School of Exploration and Mining program.

10. Provide funding for skilled regional geologists to allow them to carry out fieldwork for the development of new mining opportunities.

11. Maintain adequate funding for Geoscience BC.

Investing in Northern Development

12. Ask BC Hydro to conduct negotiations with the private sector and to consult with local residents on the possible extension of the Northwest Transmission Line north from Bob Quinn Lake.*

13. Review ALR boundaries and give consideration to removing land that is not fit for agriculture, particularly in rural regions of the province.*

14. Develop rail transportation and supply chain infrastructure to enhance export capacities for port terminals in the northwest and in the lower mainland, particularly for metallurgical coal.

15. Develop an industry-supported centre line road that would reduce the time to travel into the centre of the Horn River development by 1.5 hours, therefore eliminating the need for operating some live-in construction camps.

16. Remove an appropriate amount of land from the Agricultural Land Reserve so that Fort Nelson can expand its residential land base to accommodate the growth pressure demands of developing the Horn River, Liard, and Cordova shale gas basins.

17. Initiate a Fair Share program in the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality equivalent to the existing Fair Share program in the Peace River Regional District.

18. In collaboration with industry, First Nations, and the regional municipality, develop a regional economic strategy and implementation plan with ongoing monitoring for the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality.

19. In recognition of the pressures on public services from a rapidly expanding economy, support the development of a strategy for meeting public service needs in Fort Nelson, such as health, education and safety.

Promoting BC Agriculture

20. Provide support for a branding program for BC agricultural products, as recommended in the BC Agriculture Plan.*

21. Reinstate the Buy BC program; ensure the BC School Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program is available throughout the province.

22. Provide regular, multi-year funding for inter-ministry invasive-species programs and habitat conservation and restoration, including those administered through regional weed committees.

Part 2: Programs and Spending Priorities

The budget 2012 consultation paper noted how provincial tax revenues fund demand-driven programs such as health care, K–12 and post-secondary education, income assistance, and community social services. It also stated that demand for these programs is increasing, putting pressure on ministry budgets. Submissions to the Committee affirmed that British Columbians continue to place high value on programs and spending in priority areas such as health, education, community, and court services.

Maintaining Health Care

During the consultation process, the Committee received several requests to enhance community-based health care services for people living with Alzheimer's disease or an acquired brain injury. The Committee also heard submissions highlighting the benefits of homecare services. These services reduce demand and costs for the health care system by allowing seniors and other people with health challenges to receive supports in their residence. Other submissions called for enhanced end-of-life and hospice services, cost reductions in the pricing of generic drugs, greater use of health care professionals such as nurse practitioners, and the establishment of an elder abuse program. It was stated that actions in these areas will both improve health outcomes as well as result in overall cost savings to government.

Patient Resources

The Alzheimer Society of British Columbia appeared before the Committee again this year to request funding for the continued expansion of First Link, an early intervention initiative funded as a partnership with the Ministry of Health Services and the Vancouver Island Health Authority. The Society reported that this initiative is an effective strategy for improving the health and well-being of people with dementia and their caregivers, and for managing the substantial impact of dementia on the health care system. The Society would like to see this program expanded across the province.

The Committee also heard from BrainTrust Canada and the Nanaimo Brain Injury Society on the topic of acquired brain injury. These groups asked the Committee to repeat its recommendation from last year: the creation of a $2 million Acquired Brain Injury Innovation (ABI) Fund. Here is a sample of the input received:

> *"We ask that the Committee recommend the continued financial support to the Alzheimer Society of BC for the operation and a phased expansion of First Link so more British Columbians affected by this disease have the opportunity to live a life of quality."* (Jim Mann, Alzheimer Society of British Columbia, Chilliwack public hearing)

> *"One of the things we're advocating for is funding of the ABI innovation fund. It is a fund that will provide the development of data, materials, education, and consultation to be able to develop a service system for people with acquired brain injury in BC."* (Doug Rankmore, BrainTrust Canada Association, Kelowna public hearing)

"The Nanaimo Brain Injury Society respectfully asks the Committee to support the establishment of an Acquired Brain Injury Innovation Fund for British Columbians." (Mark Busby, Nanaimo Brain Injury Society, Written submission)

Homecare Services

A number of seniors' organizations highlighted the benefits of investing in homecare services and supports, particularly as the population ages. The Committee heard how a relatively low-cost investment in homecare services has the potential to create substantial savings for the health care system by alleviating demand for hospital beds or other expensive care options. Improved independence and quality of life for seniors and other regular users of the health care system were also cited as major benefits. Here is some of the input:

"Most seniors have not only the desire but the capability to live happily well-maintained lives with just a small amount of support around their home." (Brenda Prevost, Centre for Seniors Information, Kamloops public hearing)

"Please expand housing and health options for seniors based on their own needs and preferences, including affordability, so that they may remain independent for as long as possible and away from expensive assisted living, complex care and hospital care." (Audrey MacLise, Seniors Advisory Council of Williams Lake and Area, William Lake public hearing)

"The cost of housing individuals, especially seniors, in a care facility (particularly those occupying beds in hospitals) is so much more expensive than keeping people in their own homes." (Patrick Brady, Abbotsford, On-line survey)

End-of-life Services

Another consistent message the Committee heard was the importance of supporting end-of-life services, including hospice and palliative care. Submissions highlighted the significant service and value provided by hospice societies and their volunteers, and called for equitable support for these services across the province. In addition to highlighting the cost-effectiveness of these services, it was also noted how end-of-life care is both more compassionate and more appropriate than hospital care. Below is a sample of what the Committee heard:

"Dying, caregiving, and bereavement are issues that will affect every person in our province at one time or another in their life. Hospice palliative care builds healthy community and addresses all three of these areas." (Wendy Pratt, Vancouver Island Federation of Hospices, On-line survey)

"We need you to partner with us to develop innovative clinical programs and training opportunities for existing and new health care professionals and volunteers, and we need you to help us gain a commitment from the Vancouver Island Health Authority to provide the operational funding for this end-of-life care centre." (Terry Odeneal, Comox Valley Hospice Society, Courtenay public hearing)

"Develop a plan to commit health care authorities to fund ongoing palliative care services in conjunction with local hospice group efforts." (M.B. Page, Chemainus, Written submission)

PharmaCare and Generic Drugs

The Committee received several submissions on the subject of PharmaCare and, in particular, the cost of generic drugs. At the Cranbrook public hearing, the Committee heard how there is significant potential for cost savings through appropriate reductions in the pricing of generic drugs. It was proposed that the Ministry of Health work to ensure British Columbians get the best deal possible on the pricing of generic medications. Here is a sample of the input we received:

> *"Overspending on generic medications means that the British Columbia government has less money to invest in health care, including listing new medications on the BC PharmaCare formulary. … Lack of access to these new medications and appropriate medications has a domino effect on the rest of the health care system."* (Rennie Hoffman, Better Pharmacare Coalition, Cranbrook public hearing)

> *"We believe that the public investment in PharmaCare is making the health care system more efficient and effective, and if we can work with the government to ensure that the right patient gets the right medicine safely in a timely manner, then we'll help manage costs more effectively while increasing investments in drug research and development."* (Rob Dawson, Canada's Research-Based Pharmaceutical Companies (Rx&D), Vancouver public hearing)

> *"Please decrease and control high pharmaceutical costs through alternatives like generic drugs, and opt for national pharmacare programs which can result in major savings not just for BC but for Canada."* (Arti Tewari, Burnaby, On-line survey)

Health Care Professionals

Another suggestion on how the health care system could be improved was to make better use of health care professionals, including nurse practitioners. The Committee learned that, given the shortage of doctors in much of rural BC, using the services offered by nurse practitioners and other health care professionals would improve efficiency and services. Here is a sample of the input received from members of the public:

> *"I would like to see better use made of nurse practitioners and nurses in the system. Many patients who consult their family physician would be able to be seen by or screened by a nurse practitioner or nurse."* (Barbara Hobson, Vancouver public hearing)

> *"With current fiscal challenges, what measures can government take to help families? More efficient health care services in rural areas: i.e. nurse practitioners."* (Valerie Keeler, Fort Nelson, On-line survey)

> *"My spending priorities include a medical system that is more seamless between the professions involved i.e. a greater use of nurse practitioners [and] health units."* (Laurel Hodgins, Courtenay, On-line survey)

Elder Abuse Program

Some of the challenges facing seniors were discussed at the Surrey public hearing, including the need to address displacement of seniors when facilities close. The Committee heard a specific request to establish a provincial elder abuse program, including elder abuse guidelines. In addition to improving accountability, such a program was described as helping to ensure better supports, levels of care, and protection for elderly and vulnerable citizens.

Funding K-12 Education

K-12 education also received considerable attention during the budget consultations. For instance, the Committee received several requests from concerned educators and parents about the need to revise the funding formula for school districts and to restore funds to the annual facilities grant. The unique needs of high-growth school districts such as Surrey were also raised during the consultation process. Particular recommendations were made to change the capital funding process for high-growth regions to satisfy demands for new and improved school infrastructure. As well, the Committee received input on ways to improve services in hub city schools and for special needs students, as well as ways to develop innovative programs to promote science and education for youth, and personalized learning.

Funding Formula

Educators and parents informed the Committee of the challenges that their districts face due to funding shortfalls. Requests for changes to the current education funding formula were made to address issues such as differences in per-student funding across regions, rising student-to-teacher ratios, and the lack of specialist teachers. Some of the comments received on this topic are as follows:

> *"Our first recommendation: ensure that public education receives adequate, stable and consistent funding. In recent years we've had to significantly reduce our budget allocation for resource teachers, teacher-librarians, educational assistants and custodial staff — all of which has had a noticeable impact in the classroom."* (Al Klassen on behalf of Richmond teachers, trustees, school administrators, unionized staff, and parents, Richmond public hearing)

> *"We recommend a significant increase in funding for primary and secondary education; and an independent review of the funding formula for school boards."* (Barry O'Neill, Canadian Union of Public Employees (BC Division), Written submission)

> *"We urge the Committee to recommend that the levels of public education funding increase to provide students and teachers in BC the conditions needed to maintain and improve one of the best public education systems in the world."* (Susan Lambert, British Columbia Teachers' Federation, Vancouver public hearing)

Annual Facilities Grant

The Committee heard requests to restore the annual facilities grant to school districts. Representatives from school districts and school trustees pointed out that reductions in the grant have had an impact on school districts' ability to finance building maintenance, upgrades, and retrofits, particularly for ageing infrastructure. The following is a sample of the input received:

> *"There was a point at which the annual facilities grant that districts use to maintain and upgrade their buildings was suspended. We said at the time that this was not sensible, because the infrastructure, of course, erodes, and then it costs more, at the end of the day, to fix those issues."* (Michael McEvoy, BC School Trustees Association, Victoria public hearing)

> *"We've just completed our audits and assessments that were under the direction of the Ministry of Education and supported by the Ministry of Education to assess the conditions. … What that review has told us, by engineers, is that we would need to increase our current annual facilities grant spending by eight to nine times just to keep our buildings at the level they're at now."* (Patti Bacchus, Vancouver Board of Education, Vancouver public hearing)

> *"We strongly believe the costs to operate ageing and inefficient school facilities throughout the province should be addressed by adequate, direct funding to perform the necessary rebuilds, upgrades, and retrofits that would allow our schools to operate cost-effectively and sustainably. Increasing the Annual Facilities Grant to school districts is recommended as a partial solution to this widespread challenge."* (John Lewis, on behalf of North Vancouver School District, Board of Education, Parent Advisory Council, and Administrators, Written submission)

Capital Funding

The Committee heard how certain school districts such as Surrey face rapidly growing student populations. Increasing enrolments, it was noted, place strains on current capacity and require injections of new capital funding. In addition to calling for new funds, community stakeholders asked the Committee to recommend changes to the capital funding process in high-growth areas to pay for new and improved school infrastructure, and to replace portables with permanent classrooms. Here is some of what we heard:

> *"We ask you to urge the Treasury Board to provide adequate capital funding now to enable the Surrey school district to alleviate the overcrowding and provide equitable facilities to deliver public education today."* (Linda Stromberg, Ad Hoc Committee on Funding for Surrey Schools, Surrey public hearing)

> *"We believe that it will be necessary to focus on recognizing the capital (building) program needs of school districts in conjunction with the greater societal need for the coherent delivery of programs and services to community members of all ages."* (Laurae McNally, Board of Education, School District No. 36 (Surrey), Written submission)

"Children who attend public school in Surrey do not receive the same level of entitled resources as any other school district in BC. This is a severe problem that needs action by the BC government. We need capital funding to build more schools in Surrey. We also need a new and modern funding process that properly foresees and addresses the educational needs of rapidly growing districts such as Surrey." (Donna Denny, Surrey, Written submission)

Science World Funding

The importance of educating school children about science and technology was raised during the consultation. At the Chilliwack public hearing, for instance, representatives for Science World discussed the role that early education in science and technology plays in fostering careers in high-tech and biotech industries, as well as in health services and resource development sciences. At that hearing, both Science World and the Chilliwack school district requested additional funds to maintain the successful BC PALS program run by Science World, which is set to expire next year.

Community LINK Program

The Committee heard about some of the challenges school districts face educating children from low-income families, particularly in "inner city" type schools. Child poverty, it was stated, has an impact on educational outcomes. The Committee was urged to recommend that government fund programs such as Community Link, which provides funding to school districts to provide services such as breakfast and lunch programs, inner city and community school programs, school-based support workers, and counselling for at-risk children and youth. The Surrey Board of Trade's submission to the Committee included a call for government to address the wide per-student funding disparity for such programs that exists between school districts.

Regional Stakeholder Council for Special Needs Students

At the Vancouver hearing, the Committee heard how funding for special education grants has not kept pace with costs and the demands of a growing population. One of the suggestions made to address this issue was the creation of a regional stakeholder council. The proposed council would investigate the current challenges that school districts face for special needs students and work with the Minister of Education to identify priorities.

Early Intervention and Autism Services

Considerable input was received on the subject of early intervention and autism services. Submissions identified how early interventions can make a profound difference in the lives of these children as well as provide long-term cost savings to government. However, current levels of funding and the existing fee-for-service funding model, it was stated, are not meeting children's individual needs. Here is a sample of input on this subject:

"Only through timely and sufficient levels of early intervention therapy services will children have the opportunity to develop to their full potential. Current service levels are dramatically failing these children." (Bruce Sandy, British Columbia Association of Child Development and Intervention, Chilliwack public hearing)

"Our key message today is that government claims unprecedented spending to support children, youth with special needs, adults with developmental disabilities, and families, but since we started MOMS a decade ago, families around BC have been reporting to us an erosion of supports, growing wait-lists, reduced standards and a lack of accountability." (Dawn Steele, Moms on the Move, Vancouver public hearing)

"Approximately 300 children are on a waitlist for one service or more. Wait times for these children are 12 months. Each child has been screened and determined to have specific developmental needs. One whole year of missed treatment such as speech and language or learning how to manage a child's sensory system, during a time when the brain is achieving its optimum development for such things, is a terrible tragedy." (Carol Weber, Nanaimo Child Development Centre Society, Written submission)

Personalized Learning

The Committee received submissions from educators and school trustees discussing the merits of personalized learning programs for students. It was proposed that one particular program, the Windsor House School in North Vancouver, be used as a pilot project in select schools. This three year pilot project would incorporate aspects of personalized learning for several self-identified elementary and secondary schools, and be implemented through collaboration with students, teachers, parents, administrators, and the Ministry of Education.

Strengthening Post-secondary Education

Ideas on how to improve the province's post-secondary education system were also presented to the Committee. Representatives from BC's major colleges and universities, as well as student and faculty associations, stated that support and investment in post-secondary education are essential. For example, the Committee consistently heard how providing greater financial assistance to students would help to reduce barriers to post-secondary access.

Other submissions proposed ways to address current challenges in the post-secondary sector. Several colleges and universities asked for changes to current accounting standards to permit greater access to outside capital and the ability to utilize surplus funds. Greater funding of the annual capital allowance was also requested for institutions to undertake needed upgrades and maintenance of existing physical infrastructure. Finally, requests were made to increase post-secondary seats in the South Fraser region to address growing population demands.

Accounting Standards

Several submissions referenced the ongoing challenges facing colleges and universities that are now included in the government reporting entity. Colleges and universities across the province stated that the changes to accounting rules have hindered the ability to access outside capital and to utilize surplus funds – whether for infrastructure renewal, programming, or services for students. Here is a sampling of what colleges and universities had to say:

"Changes in the government administrative and accounting policies that limit the use of surplus funds have restricted our ability to respond effectively to the changing needs of students and the incredible opportunities presented by the growing investment currently happening in northwestern BC. At a time when we need to be as agile and adaptable as possible, these policies are inhibiting our ability to respond efficiently. We call on government to make the necessary changes so we can work more effectively with what we have available." (Dave O'Leary, Northwest Community College, Smithers public hearing)

"At a time when there is an increased need for flexibility and nimbleness, government administrative requirements and changes to accounting policies and standards are restrictive and may have a dramatic impact on our institution's future ability to respond effectively to changing education and training requirements within our communities." (Randall Heidt, College of New Caledonia, Prince George public hearing)

"We recommend that government explore ways for public post-secondary institutions to be able to borrow funds for self-financed projects that wouldn't impact government debt-to-GDP ratio." (Jackie Hogan, University of the Fraser Valley, Chilliwack public hearing)

Annual Capital Allowance

Several colleges and universities also called on government to provide additional resources for the maintenance of existing buildings. These submissions noted that, due to past reductions in the annual capital allowance (ACA), cyclical maintenance and upgrades for aging facilities are being deferred. Here is some of the input:

"We recommend reinstatement of the annual capital allowance funding to 2008/09 level concomitant with the three-year fiscal plan in order to extend the life of existing building inventory and improve the environmental sustainability of campuses." (Robin Ciceri, Research Universities' Council of British Columbia, Written submission)

"ACA funding provides critical support for building maintenance, minor renovations, and upgrade projects. However, with the reduction in ACA funding, our institutions have had to further defer maintenance or reallocate operating funding from teaching and research to maintain existing infrastructure. This situation is not sustainable." (Ruth Wittenberg, BC Association of Institutes and Universities, Written submission)

"The reduction in the annual capital allowance, funding for cyclical maintenance, will become an even greater issue for TRU in the near future. The recently completed facilities audit indicated that TRU will need to invest considerable funds to maintain its core assets and improve the environmental sustainability of our physical infrastructure. British Columbians have made a significant capital investment in TRU, and this investment must be protected." (Karl deBruijn, Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops public hearing)

Post-secondary Seats in the S. Fraser Region

At the Surrey public hearing, the Committee heard about a need for improved access to post-secondary education in the South Fraser region, one of the fastest-growing areas of the province. It was stated that the creation of additional full-time equivalent seats in the region will provide students with more opportunities to study close to home, as well as provide businesses with access to a highly educated local workforce. The President of Simon Fraser University specifically asked that government recommit to a 2006 memorandum signed between the university and the Province to double the size of the SFU Surrey campus. Here is what was said:

> *"The province agreed in 2006 that doubling the SFU Surrey campus was a good investment – and a key objective to providing BC's fastest-growing region with equitable access to post-secondary education. … The case for that investment is even more compelling – and urgent – today."* (Andrew Petter, Simon Fraser University, Surrey public hearing)

> *"Surrey continues to have the lowest post-secondary rates of participation. Simon Fraser University and Kwantlen Polytechnic are dramatically underfunded to serve this rapidly growing region. Yet there are thousands of students who want to pursue their academic and applied degrees in trades training in their home communities and can't."* (Eric Wilson, Surrey Board of Trade, Surrey public hearing)

Student Loan Interest Rates

Many submissions received from students, faculty, and members of the public offered suggestions on how to improve post-secondary education access and affordability. A common message was the need to lower interest rates on BC student loans. The Committee heard how a lowering of the interest rate would bring BC's rates into line with those of other provinces, reduce financial barriers to higher education, and ease the burden of student debt. Here is a sample of the input received on this topic:

> *"A reduction on student loan interest rates helps graduates participate in the economy by reducing their debt burden and allowing for more spending."* (Jaraad Marani, Where's the Funding?!, Victoria public hearing)

> *"Our faculty association shares the concerns of many student organizations within our post-secondary institutions – that BC needs to address the affordability problem."* (Jan Mastromatteo, Faculty Association of the College of New Caledonia, Prince George public hearing)

> *"With current fiscal challenges, what measures can government take to help families? Lower tuition or lower-interest/no-interest student loans for all post-secondary students, including part-time and selected continuing education students."* (Kera Mchugh, Courtenay, On-line survey)

Up-front, Needs-based Grants

Another prominent message heard from post-secondary students and faculty associations from across the province was the need for a provincial system of up-front, needs-based student grants. This form of financial aid, it was stated, helps to ease students' financial burden, encourages greater participation and education success, and supports equal access to post-secondary education. Here are examples of what was heard:

"The federal government has acknowledged the burden of student debt across the country and implemented the Canada student grant program last year. In contrast, BC has the lowest level of non-repayable financial aid in the country." (Zachary Crispin, Canadian Federation of Students - BC Office, Richmond public hearing)

"Up-front grants programs are the key policy provision to making post-secondary education more accessible. They are the thing that every other province in Canada, including our federal government, has seen the value in and has been able to institute in an effective manner." (Tara Paterson, University of Victoria Students' Society, Victoria public hearing)

"We need to address the affordability challenges that current students face. Simply capping already expensive tuition fees doesn't address the real problem. We could make a meaningful step in the right direction by reviving the student grant program which would at least allow those with the most significant financial challenges some relief." (Tim Walters, Okanagan College Faculty Association, Written submission)

Graduate Seats and Fellowships

The Committee received several requests to expand opportunities for graduate education in the province. This input included specific proposals to create more graduate seats as well as to establish a provincial graduate fellowship program. The Committee was informed that British Columbia is at a competitive disadvantage compared to other provinces, and that this affects our ability to attract top graduate students. Furthermore, the Committee heard how improving opportunities for graduate education is crucial to advancing academic and applied research, as well as to meeting future labour market demands. The following comments were made on this topic:

"Please provide $2.5 million in 2012/13 to introduce 250 graduate scholarships at $10,000 each. Increase the number of scholarships to 1,000 over a four year period to recruit outstanding graduate students who will take their advanced learning and new ideas beyond the university to the workplace." (Robin Ciceri, Research Universities' Council of British Columbia, Written submission)

"British Columbia is currently at a competitive disadvantage when it comes to recruiting top graduate students. Whether we are trying to keep British Columbians at home or recruit top students from elsewhere in Canada or abroad, we are hampered by insufficient financial support for graduate students. … But unlike Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, and Alberta, British Columbia does not have a provincial fellowship program to attract and retain top graduate students." (David Mirhady, Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia, Vancouver public hearing)

"Our recommendation today is that new funding be made available for graduate student seats at BC's special purpose teaching universities for the development and support of applied research." (Karen Whistler, Emily Carr Students' Union, Surrey public hearing)

Resourcing Community Services

During the course of the consultation process, the Committee received numerous submissions on community services. In addition to underscoring the important role of these services to British Columbians, submissions proposed ways to improve both services as well as how they are delivered. Requests were heard to improve community living services, the funding model for community-based employment service providers, and supports for Aboriginal friendship centres. In addition, arts and culture groups submitted requests to improve community gaming grants.

Community Living Services

Concerns were expressed about the situation facing someone who is receiving designated services from the Ministry of Children and Family Development and must transition to Community Living BC (CLBC) when they turn 19. The Committee heard that this transition can be problematic – largely due to insufficient to services and supports – and often results in the interruption of services for these vulnerable young adults. Urged to make recommendations to immediately improve this situation, the Committee heard the following:

> *"What really are the expectations of families? … That some help and support should be provided so that they can know that their sons and daughters are safe while they are at work, earning money so that they can pay their taxes, and can support our social programs and our infrastructure. They expect to continue to do what they had done for the previous 19 years: care for and love their children until they are ready to move into homes of their own and enter day programs."* (Faith Bodnar, BC Association for Community Living, Vancouver public hearing)

> *"On reaching 19, young people with developmental disabilities cannot continue receiving services. They must now apply then wait until funds become available. Many of these are presently waiting for services."* (B. Masako Stillwell, Community Family Link Society of British Columbia, Written submission)

> *"In order to do a healthy transition from youth to adulthood, we need services to transition them to, and we are seeing huge gaps in our area to be able to transition children and youth, particularly into the adult years."* (Kerri Bassett-Kluss, Kitimat and Bulkley Valley Child Development Centre Societies, Smithers public hearing)

Funding Model for Community-based Employment Service Providers

At the Victoria public hearing, ASPECT, a provincial association of community-based employment training agencies, gave a presentation highlighting issues relating to the BC Employment Program, a recently-created comprehensive employment program delivered through contracted agencies. Changes to the funding model were requested in order to allow for more flexibility in the use of existing funds.

Community Gaming Grants

Community gaming grants provide eligible organizations in BC with access to gaming funding for youth arts, culture, sports, and other activities. The Committee heard from several organizations calling for improvements to both gaming grant amounts as well as how these are distributed. Here is some of what was heard:

> *"We request a clear, articulated process to access funds through gaming and timely allocations of funding to allow us to plan. We encourage a strong consideration of the reinstatement of multi-year grants to both reduce bureaucracy and to, again, facilitate strong planning."* (Jann Bailey, Kamloops Art Gallery, Kamloops public hearing)

> *"Right now our sports live year to year. They never really know what the funding model will be for the next year, but they have to make commitments to programs, to coaches, to officials to drive sport in the province. It's very, very difficult to do that when you're really unsure what the funding is going to be like starting in June and July, when they find this out."* (Tim Gayda, Sport BC, Richmond public hearing)

> *"I'd just like to reiterate that agencies such as ours that provide services in the community to vulnerable children and youth should be a priority for gaming funds and that a formula that provides some stability and not sort of one-shot-only funding would be most helpful."* (Lorraine Aitken, Comox Valley Child Development Association, Courtenay public hearing)

Arts and Culture

The Committee received a consistent message from organizations and citizens about the importance of arts and culture to the province. Submissions stated how a healthy arts and cultural sector not only fosters social and civic pride, but also creates revenue, attracts investment and tourism, and builds communities. Here is a sample of what was said:

> *"Restoring core funding will ensure stability for the hundreds of arts and cultural groups across the province; will ensure ongoing economic, social, and health benefits to our communities; and will contribute to the growth of a successful cultural tourism sector."* (Joan Richoz, ArtsBC, Written submission)

> *"What the arts and cultural community needs is dependable, dedicated, multi-year, secure core funding so that artists and arts groups can plan prudently and effectively over the long-term. Stable core funding ensures sustainable arts and cultural activities that contribute positively to the economic and social well-being of our communities."* (Peter Sandmark, ProArt Alliance of Greater Victoria, Victoria public hearing)

> *"Maintaining core funding for arts and culture will ensure stability for the hundreds of organizations across the province; will ensure ongoing economic, social, and health benefits to our communities; and will contribute to the growth of a successful cultural tourism sector."* (Evelyn Lee, Prince George Cantata Singers, Written submission)

Friendship Centres

During the course of the consultation process, the Committee received a number of submissions advocating for funding for Aboriginal friendship centres. These submissions highlighted the fact that more than 70 percent of BC's Aboriginal population lives off-reserve, and that friendship centres provide valuable community services that improve social, economic, and educational outcomes. A specific request was made for investment in an off-reserve Aboriginal strategy that includes a long-term annualized investment of $3.1 million in friendship centres. Here is a sampling of what was heard:

> *"We're asking for a long-term capacity fund, and basically a migrating native peoples program, as the federal government recognized a number of years ago, and also the need to create and implement a coordinated strategy for Aboriginal people living off reserve."* (Paul Lacerte, BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, Victoria public hearing)

> *"Friendship Centres are the largest social infrastructure network for more than 70% of BC's Aboriginal population, and they are increasingly burdened with the growing demand for social, cultural, education, and health support services."* (Diane Nicholls, Saanichton, Written submission)

Enhancing Court Services

Some of the current challenges in the justice system were raised during the consultations. The Committee heard about several innovative ways to address court delays, including making greater used of legal information outreach workers, legal aid services, and restorative justice programs in communities.

Funding for Court Services

The issue of funding for court services was raised in several submissions to the Committee. Inadequate funding from the Ministry of Attorney General, it was noted, results in clogged courtrooms and delays in court proceedings. Shortages of judges, prosecutors, sheriffs, and courthouse staff were also cited as problems in the justice system. It was proposed that greater use be made of legal information outreach workers. These non-lawyers, it was stated, help court users navigate the justice system, thus alleviating demands on lawyers and other courthouse staff and resulting in significant cost savings. These are some of the comments received on this topic:

> *"We're short Crowns. We're short judges. We're short sheriffs. Our closest remand centre is eight hours away."* (Jenny Reid, Prince Rupert video conference session)

> *"One of the things we're doing right now is to look at what low-cost non-lawyers can do in that setting to help people navigate the justice system. At the Legal Services Society we call these people legal information outreach workers."* (Mark Benton, Legal Services Society, Courtenay public hearing)

> *"With current fiscal challenges, what measures can government take to help families? Improve family justice services, including social workers, mediators, Family Justice Centre staff, legal aid and family court judges. The new Family Law Act will be a tremendous improvement, but it needs resources."* (David Dundee, Kamloops, On-line survey)

Legal Aid Services

The Committee heard recommendations for improvements to provincial legal aid services. Representatives from the BC Branch of the Canadian Bar Association advocated increased funding for legal aid services to save money in the justice, health, and social welfare systems. Other submissions highlighted the impact of inadequate legal aid funding on women and seniors with mental illness. Here are excerpts of what was heard:

> *"Without an adequately-funded legal aid program, the justice system will continue to face increased costs and stresses from unnecessary case filings, prolonged hours of trials and hearing and the attendant delays, and decreased public confidence as important cases get thrown out due to delay."* (Sharon Matthews, Canadian Bar Association - British Columbia Branch, Vancouver public hearing)

> *"While inadequate legal aid affects us all, the lack of legal aid has a devastating and disproportional impact on women, particularly women living in poverty, women of colour, Aboriginal women, women with disabilities, and other marginalized women."* (Laura Track, West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund, Written submission)

> *"We have to address the problem of getting legal aid back in force for people who need assistance with issues to do with family and money. Without legal aid, there is no counsel and assistance for people with real concerns and needs."* (Dr. Mychael Gleeson, MYCHAEL Co., On-line survey)

Restorative Justice

The restorative justice program – a diversion program that can be used with or in lieu of the traditional court system – was discussed at the Fort St. John public hearing. In its presentation to the Committee, the North Peace Justice Society expounded the benefits of using the program, adding that it results in lower recidivism rates and facilitates the integration of offenders into the community. The Committee also heard how restorative justice results in cost savings to the justice system, including over $400,000 a year in Fort St. John alone. It was noted that there are 60 different restorative justice programs in the province, all of which are trying to find sustainable funding.

Conclusions

Despite the need to balance the provincial budget and to meet fiscal targets, the Committee recognizes that it is imperative for government to constantly reassess whether services are meeting the needs of the most vulnerable. Accordingly, in health care, the Committee has made several recommendations that will both enhance services to those in need, as well as result in new efficiencies and cost savings to government.

On K-12 education, the Committee recommends that steps be taken to address issues relating to the current funding formula and the annual facilities grant. While acknowledging the recent announcement of $300 million to cover projects in seven school districts, the Committee encourages that funds be targeted to address high-need areas. Other suggestions are made to improve educational outcomes for vulnerable children and to explore new learning innovations.

The Committee is cognizant of the fact that more than 70 percent of the million-plus jobs that will be created in the next 20 years in BC will require at least some post-secondary education. Accordingly, the Committee recommends steps that government can take to strengthen the post-secondary sector, including reviewing post-secondary accounting standards, developing a plan to address capital funding issues, and increasing the number of student FTEs at SFU. As well, three recommendations are made to improve student access and affordability.

The Committee also acknowledges the valuable contributions of community service providers and the not-for-profit sector in BC. It is recommended that the current review of CLBC be expedited, and that sufficient investments be provided to ensure that vulnerable people are well-served. Other recommendations seek to improve and build on proven successes in other community services.

Finally, the Committee provides four recommendations on how to enhance court services. These include proposals to ensure that funds are targeted towards programs and services with proven track records of success, particularly those identified as bringing overall cost savings to government.

Recommendations

In the following list, recommendations identified with an asterisk (37, 43-45, and 48) are identified as needing immediate consideration by government. The other recommendations should be considered as budget conditions permit.

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Maintaining Health Care

23. Consider providing funding for the Alzheimer Society's First Link program and the Acquired Brain Injury and Innovation Fund.
24. Increase homecare services to save hospital costs as these services are less expensive than hospital beds.
25. Acknowledge the importance of end-of-life services within the medical care structure and provide equitable support to in-home hospice care, hospice houses and palliative care facilities across the province, recognizing the valuable contributions made by volunteers in this area.
26. Provide better PharmaCare through pricing reform for generic drugs.
27. Utilize fully the expertise and scope of practice of all health care professionals – including nurse practitioners – around the province, particularly in rural BC.
28. Work with the federal government to establish an effective elder abuse program.

Funding K-12 Education

29. Support the Ministry of Education and work with stakeholders to revamp the current funding formula.
30. Provide stable and predictable funding for school districts and continue to restore the K-12 annual facilities grant.

31. Review the capital funding process, particularly for high-growth school districts.
32. Continue to work with partners like Science World to promote science and technology education programs, such as the successful BC PALS program.
33. Review the Community Link program and consider moving to a needs-based funding formula for school districts.
34. Support the establishment of regional stakeholder tables to work with the Ministry of Education to identify priorities within school districts to deal with special needs students.
35. Improve resourcing to address any delays for early intervention therapy and autism services in order to facilitate the transition of children with special needs into the K-12 system.
36. Consider the Windsor House proposal as a pilot project for selected schools to capitalize on personalized learning for all students in the school system.

Strengthening Post-secondary Education

37. Review the application of accounting standards to universities and colleges in order to arrive at a satisfactory solution, since existing policy denies post-secondary institutions the opportunity to access outside capital and to manage their budgets, including surpluses.*
38. Compile a province-wide inventory of current and future maintenance needs for post-secondary infrastructure and develop a realistic plan to fund the Annual Capital Allowance.
39. Recommit to the Memorandum of Understanding signed with SFU and the Province in 2006 to double the size of SFU Surrey from 2,500 FTEs to 5,000 student FTEs.
40. Continue to fund graduate seats and to support a BC graduate fellowship program in order to attract and retain graduate students in the province.
41. Lower student loan interest rates to the same national ranking as BC tuition fees – i.e. middle of the pack.
42. Establish a provincial system of upfront needs-based grants to ensure success for students at all socioeconomic levels.

Resourcing Community Services

43. Expedite the review of Community Living BC and be prepared to invest as appropriate; and continue to improve planning and services for youth and adults with special needs who are in transition or whose families are in transition.*
44. Support the development of a full-cost and sustainable funding model for community-based employment service programs that deliver services on behalf of government.*
45. Give consideration to improving how community gaming grants are distributed, in recognition of the valuable services of non-profit and volunteer organizations.*
46. Recognize the economic benefits of a vibrant arts and culture sector.
47. In conjunction with the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, develop a long-term capacity fund and implement a coordinated strategy for Aboriginal people living off reserve.

Enhancing Court Services

48. Invest in legal information outreach workers as these non-lawyers can help court users navigate the justice system in a cost-effective way.*

49. Review funding for the Ministry of Attorney General to address clogged courtrooms, a shortage of judges, prosecutors, and courthouse staff.

50. Review legal aid services to ensure adequate assistance for citizens who suffer from mental illness, including cognitive impairment and dementia.

51. Examine funding options for the province's 60 restorative justice programs, including the Alberta model, as these programs result in significant cost savings.

Part 3: Fiscal Management

The Committee received several suggestions on how to address current fiscal challenges and improve tax policy to stimulate economic growth. For example, submissions stressed the need to continue working towards balancing the budget by 2013/14, to maintain BC's high credit rating and debt-to-GDP ratio below 20 percent, and to promote efficiencies and cost savings through deregulation.

Transitional rules to facilitate the return to the PST/GST system also received considerable attention during the consultation. Submissions from industry and business groups called for a speedy transition back to the PST/GST system, one that includes transparency and appropriate consultation with stakeholders. Specific input was also forwarded on how to ensure a smooth transition and to modernize and streamline the PST.

Requests were heard to revise other areas of provincial taxation. Several industries, for example, spoke about the impact of the carbon tax and cap-and-trade system on their sectors, and asked that government cap future increases to the tax and pursue options to make BC businesses more competitive. Proposals were also made to reform commercial and industrial tax rates and to follow through with the request to eliminate the aviation fuel tax on international flights. Lastly, the Committee heard how changes in taxation – for agricultural improvements; the digital, film, and television industry; and wharf operators – would attract investment and stimulate the economy.

Staying the Course

Fiscal Plan

The Committee received input from both the business community and industry urging government to continue to focus on eliminating the deficit. It was also stated that while uncertain economic times and the return to the PST/GST system would make balancing the budget difficult, government's priorities must be controlling spending, maintaining the Province's triple-A credit rating, and containing growth in the debt-to-GDP ratio. Here is a sample of what we heard:

> *"Government's primary role as stewards of the public purse must be developing sound fiscal policy underscored by balanced budgets. This is the foundation upon which successful economies and sustainable social programs are built."* (Jon Garson, British Columbia Chamber of Commerce, Surrey public hearing)

> *"Supported debt has gone from about 13 percent of GDP – on track – to hit a little over 18 percent by the end of the current fiscal plan. That's not a severe deterioration, and we still are in a relatively strong position compared to many other jurisdictions, but it's obviously a trend. We don't want to see it continue, going forward. With that as backdrop, we do support the government's fiscal objectives of containing the growth in the debt-to-GDP ratio and bringing the operating budget back into a balanced position by 2013/14."* (Jock Finlayson, Business Council of British Columbia, Richmond public hearing)

"The province has a significant unplanned deficit to deal with, and there will be negative impacts on the economy as a result, regardless of how it is addressed. The government must balance the need to support a growing economy, meet its commitments to a balanced budget, and address the transition back to the PST plus GST tax regime." (Peter Jeffrey, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, Written submission)

Deregulation

The Committee received submissions from businesses and citizens encouraging the provincial government to continue to reduce government regulation and red tape to create efficiencies and cost savings. Specific comments were made about provincial legislation requiring annual reporting on regulation, as well as the need for development of a new "sector lens" – applied like the small business lens – to ensure that sectors facing new regulation would benefit from corresponding deregulation in other areas. Here are some excerpts on this topic:

"BC has made substantial inroads when it comes to reducing BC's regulatory burden on business. However, BC should continue seeking ways to make its regulatory system clear and predictable to investors and businesses, thereby reducing associated costs." (Richard Rees, Institute of Chartered Accountants of British Columbia, Vancouver public hearing)

"We would like to acknowledge the continued leadership that British Columbia is showing through deregulation and with the commitment – which, by the way, was the first in Canada – to bring in legislation requiring an annual report on regulation." (Shachi Kurl, Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Surrey public hearing)

"The Province must develop a mechanism that can be applied to the development of any new regulations to make sure no sector has new regulations added without the benefit of deregulation elsewhere." (Mark Startup and Shafiq Jamal, Retail Council of Canada and Shelfspace, Richmond public hearing)

"How can we maintain BC as a preferred destination for investment? Focus on streamlining permitting requirements and generally reducing red tape. This is a good idea anytime, but is a particularly good idea when the economy is in tough shape. In almost all cases, reducing red tape leads to efficiencies in the system." (Lyle Craver, North Vancouver, BC, On-line survey)

Revising Tax Policy

Transition from HST to PST

In response to the outcome of the provincial referendum on the Harmonized Sales Tax, the BC government is in the process of returning to the old system of the provincial sales tax (PST) and the federal goods and services tax (GST). A key theme of the input received on this topic was that government must move quickly to provide HST transitional rules to business, industry, and other stakeholders in order to provide certainty and to enable any transitional issues to be addressed prior to implementation. Here is a sample of comments received:

"The British Columbia Real Estate Association is urging the provincial government to move as quickly as possible to establish transition rules that are clear and transparent and, if at all possible, to shorten the time for the transition period." (Robert Laing, British Columbia Real Estate Association, Surrey public hearing)

"We recommend that the Province and the federal government seek a speedy resolution to the obstacles impeding the return to pre-HST taxation conditions; that the business sector be provided with transition dates as early as possible; and that a policy be drafted quickly, and quickly endorsed, that would establish a treatment of HST paid during the transition phase." (Bryn Gilbert, Kelowna Chamber of Commerce, Kelowna public hearing)

"The government needs to announce the HST transition rules as soon as possible – or face a declining new housing market and the resulting implications." (Maureen Enser, Urban Development Institute – Pacific Region, Written submission)

PST on New Homes

Representatives from the real estate and construction industries also spoke about the adverse effects caused by uncertainty over the transition, and how people are delaying purchases of new homes. It was recommended that the 7 percent PST on all new home and secondary home purchases be immediately removed in order to improve housing affordability and sales, and to spur housing construction. Here is what we heard on these topics:

"Help reduce uncertainty in the housing marketplace as we all transition back from the harmonized sales tax to the old tax regime of the provincial sales tax and the goods and services tax. This is extremely important." (Dennis Fimrite, Victoria Real Estate Board, Victoria public hearing)

"Let's look at removing the PST portion of the HST immediately. ... We know that we are at the mercy of the federal government and what they will, and allow us to, do. But we also know that this government has never been afraid to take bold action and to do things that will make a difference." (M.J. Whitemarsh, Canadian Home Builders' Association of British Columbia, Chilliwack public hearing)

"The HST may have been rejected in a referendum, but it is still in force, and having a dire effect on new home sales. Having punitive taxes on the sale of new homes is a recipe for disaster." (Tami Smith-Daniels, Victoria, BC, On-line survey)

PST Reform

Other submissions included ideas on how to provide mid-term opportunities to modernize and streamline the PST. For example, a presentation from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business stated that government could simplify the tax to better assist small business owners. Overall, submissions suggested that consultations with accountants, businesses, and the housing industry are vital to creating an improved taxation environment. Here is a sample of other input on this topic:

"We believe that now the HST's fate has been sealed, it is important to look at developing a truly sustainable tax policy that involves tax simplification." (Edward Downing, Certified General Accountants Association of British Columbia, Written submission)

"We encourage government to pursue an improved PST environment and to consult to the fullest extent with [the construction] industry to ensure the new tax regime improves BC's productivity and supports both existing jobs and job creation." (Manley McLachlan, British Columbia Construction Association, Victoria public hearing)

"We are asking the government to conduct a major public consultation on the future of the PST and to include a representative from the Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver on the new jobs and investment board. Construction, real estate, and housing need to be represented there. We need to ensure that existing jobs are preserved in addition to creating new ones." (Harriet Permut, Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver, Richmond public hearing)

Carbon Tax

The future of the BC carbon tax was raised in several submissions to the Committee. Under the current legislation, a final increase to the carbon tax is scheduled for July 1, 2012. The Committee received a variety of comments on the value of the carbon tax, including what future steps should be taken to either review or cap future increases to the tax. While a few environmental organizations such as the Pembina Institute favoured increasing the tax, key sectors of the provincial economy advocated capping it to reduce negative impacts on industry. Business groups called on government to review current carbon tax policy and to take steps to improve the competiveness of BC industries subject to the tax. Here is a sample of the feedback:

"With the carbon tax schedule expiring next year, with the last increase scheduled for July 2012, I think there's an opportunity here to revisit how the carbon tax moves forward. I would like to suggest to you that there would be tremendous benefit in rebalancing how the revenues of the carbon tax are spent and channelling some of that into some sort of fund to look at developing clean, green technologies that industry can use to reduce our emissions and increase our energy efficiency." (Ben Chalmers, Mining Association of BC, Vancouver public hearing)

"BC is the only jurisdiction in North America that imposes the carbon tax. We are competing. None of our competitors have a carbon tax. This has cost us, to date, with the last increase, $45 million a year. With the increase that's anticipated in 2012, that'll be $65 million. Keep in mind that the agriculture industry last year had a cumulative net loss of $80 million. We are quickly moving to a situation where we could say that it is government policy that is putting us in this negative net operating income area." (Garnet Etsell, BC Agriculture Council, Chilliwack public hearing)

"We'd ask that instead of renewing the legislation and bringing in further increases, instead of reallocating that money to transit or keeping it revenue neutral, that you simply freeze it or roll back the carbon tax increase altogether." (Jordan Bateman, Canadian Taxpayers Federation, Surrey public hearing)

Cap-and-trade System

Input was also received on the subject of greenhouse gas offset and emissions trading through the cap-and-trade system. It was suggested that the current world economic situation needs to be considered before undertaking any further development of cap and trade. The Coast Forest Products Association specifically proposed that cap-and-trade activities be deferred until 2015 during which

time an impact and benefit assessment of both the cap-and-trade system and the carbon tax be undertaken. The Mining Association of British Columbia stated that, if not implemented carefully, cap-and-trade policies and the carbon tax could have a significant impact on investment.

Aviation Fuel Tax

Several submissions to the Committee referenced a 2010 government proposal to eliminate the fuel tax for international flights by April 1, 2012. Presenters told the Committee that, given the obstacles already posed to the industry by federal policies, the removal of the tax on aviation fuel is especially important for BC to be able to compete with neighboring jurisdictions, particularly the US, and to attract international tourism. Here is some of what was said:

> *"Our competitors in terms of Washington, California, and Alaska do not have a fuel tax on international flights – likewise, the province of Alberta. So it's a competitive issue for us, and when we're out there marketing to international carriers, asking them to choose a gateway into North America, the fuel tax is an issue for them."* (Tony Gugliotta, Vancouver Airport Authority, Surrey public hearing)

> *"The Province of BC agreed to eliminate the fuel tax charge for international flights at Vancouver. In addition, the airport authority then froze their landing fees and processing fees at the 2010 level. The airport there has received commitments from more than 20 air carriers to expand their services on the basis of that fee freeze and lowering of taxation."* (Fred Legace, Kamloops Airport Ltd., Kamloops public hearing)

> *"Probably the biggest drawback to international tourism is the competitive situation on airfares. It's so much cheaper to fly across the US to go to a US ski resort as opposed to flying into Canada. In some cases it's nearly double the price."* (Al Raine, Sun Peaks Mountain Resort Municipality, Kamloops public hearing)

Ports Property Tax Act

The Committee received a written submission from the operators of BC's wharf terminals discussing some of the future challenges facing the industry. The submission of the BC Wharf Operators' Association noted how the *Ports Property Tax Act* contains a "sunset clause" in regard to the property tax rate cap on designated port facilities. This provision is scheduled to expire in 2018. The Committee heard that while terminal operators are eager to make necessary capital investments to handle increases in exports, they require a commitment to leases with terms between 30 and 50 years. To address this, the Association urged government to eliminate the Act's "sunset clause."

Commercial and Industrial Tax Rates

The issue of commercial and industrial tax rates was raised in several submissions to the Committee. The need to reform rates to encourage capital investment was mentioned, along with the need to increase taxation competitiveness with other jurisdictions. In addition to submissions from the business sector, the Committee also heard from a number of local governments voicing concern over their dependence on property taxes, which are not linked to economic performance. Requests were

made that local governments be given access to new and alternate methods for revenue generation. Here is a sample of the input:

> *"Our advice to the Province is to take charge of the file and, through legislative amendments, institute a new system governing business property tax in the province that will put some limits on the amount of property tax that can be charged to business and industrial taxpayers relative to residents and, second, have an effective appeal mechanism in place, as a lot of other provinces do, so that there is some kind of a recourse, beyond going to the courts, for taxpayers that feel they haven't been dealt with."* (Jock Finlayson, Business Council of British Columbia, Richmond public hearing)

> *"We realize that by closing the gap between residential rates and the various commercial rates, municipal governments and leaders risk the ire of voters who put them in office. However, the gap represents an unfair tax burden on businesses and a significant barrier to investment."* (Sean Campbell, Cranbrook and District Chamber of Commerce, Cranbrook public hearing)

> *"Certainly, one of the biggest problems we have in local government is our dependence on property-based taxation. It's a huge hurdle. It's not tied to the economy."* (Al Richmond, Cariboo Regional District, Williams Lake public hearing)

> *"How can we maintain BC as a preferred destination for investment? Map out a long term transition strategy to bring tax rates for heavy industry in smaller communities to levels more in line with other Canadian and North American communities."* (Brian Gavin, North Vancouver, On-line survey)

Farm Improvements Tax Exemption

The Committee has recommended in previous years that government implement recommendation 9 of the Farm Assessment Review Panel's 2009 report regarding exemptions for farm improvements. At the Chilliwack public hearing, the BC Agriculture Council called on the Committee to reiterate this recommendation to encourage redevelopment of existing buildings. The Council recommended that farm improvements be exempt from residential tax at 87.5 percent of assessed value or $50,000, whichever is greater.

Film Industry Tax Credits

As in prior years, the Committee heard from representatives of BC's film and TV production industry how important the Digital Animation or Visual Effects (DAVE) tax credit – a program which provides refundable tax credits on a corporation's digital animation or visual effects activities – is to maintaining BC's competitiveness. Specific recommendations were made to extend the tax credit to include post-production activities such as sound and audio. Other submissions called on government to include screenwriter fees as eligible labour expenditures under Film Incentive BC. Doing so, it was explained, would boost competitiveness as well as encourage the hiring of local talent. Below are samples of what was heard:

> *"What we are trying to do in order to compete is to include post-production within the DAVE tax credit, and we think it would give us a tool to gain back work that we are losing."* (Peter Leitch, Motion Picture Production Industry Association of British Columbia, Vancouver public hearing)

"The policies and investments by the government to date have created an established and growing production service sector. However, we're very far from realizing the full potential and revenues available by investing in and growing the domestic, or BC-owned, side of the production industry." (Brian Hamilton, Canadian Media Production Association – BC Producer's Branch, Richmond public hearing)

"Including screenwriting in the Film Incentive BC tax calculations would cost about $360,000 – or about three-tenths of 1 percent of the $1.2 billion spent on film and TV production in BC last year. This would level the playing field for BC writers and give us a fighting chance to work on productions at home and contribute to the local economy." (Charles Lazer, Victoria, BC, Written submission)

"Please continue to subsidize the film and television industry in BC by allowing production tax credits to continue. … Something else to consider would be to include the employment of BC resident screenwriters in the tax credit." (Andrew Carr, Coquitlam, BC, Written submission)

Conclusions

The Committee concurs that government must continue to be fiscally prudent and strive to meet budget targets. This includes upholding the commitment to balance the provincial budget in the 2013/14 fiscal year, and maintaining BC's high credit rating and debt-to-GDP ratio below 20 percent. Continuing to reduce red tape is also identified as necessary to attracting investment.

On taxation, the Committee believes there is a case for measures to assist the transition from HST to the PST/GST system, and for working with local governments to align BC's commercial and industrial tax rates with other Canadian jurisdictions. On the carbon tax, it was determined that steps need to be taken to cap further increases and to provide assistance to industries that are negatively affected by the tax.

Other changes could be implemented to promote further efficiencies, improve conditions for long-term investment, and enhance the competitiveness of BC industries.

Recommendations

In the following list, recommendations identified with an asterisk (52-54 and 64-65) are identified as needing immediate consideration by government. The other recommendations should be considered as budget conditions permit.

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Staying the Course

52. Reaffirm the commitment to balance the provincial budget by the 2013/14 fiscal year, and maintain the Province's triple-A credit rating.*
53. Continue to maintain the province's debt-to-GDP ratio at less than 20 percent.*
54. Continue to reduce government regulation and red tape.*

Revising Tax Policy

55. Complete the transition from HST to PST as soon as responsibly possible.
56. Make HST transitional rules available to industry as soon as possible; remove the PST portion of the HST immediately on all new homes, including second homes.
57. Strike a stakeholder working group to look at the advisability of mid-term opportunities to modernize and streamline the PST.
58. Continue to work with local governments to bring commercial and industrial tax rates into line with other Canadian jurisdictions to ensure BC remains competitive, and work with local governments and the UBCM to find alternative ways for local government to raise revenue.
59. Cap the carbon tax at the rate as of July 2, 2012.
60. Address the inequity for BC cement producers arising from imported cement not being subject to a carbon tax.
61. Review the impacts of the carbon tax on all business sectors and develop a strategy to keep BC businesses competitive with other jurisdictions.
62. Consider immediate carbon tax exclusions for agriculture, including the greenhouse sector, and public institutions.
63. Stop further expenditures on the development of cap and trade until the province has sufficient trading partners to trade with.
64. Maintain the commitment to eliminate the aviation fuel tax by April 2012.*
65. Revise Section 3 of the Ports Property Tax Act to extend the property tax rate cap on designated port facilities beyond the 2018 taxation year – for an additional 30 years.*
66. Exempt farm improvements at 87.5 percent of assessed value, or $50,000, whichever is greater.
67. Extend the DAVE credit to post production activities and include writer fees as eligible labour expenditures under Film Incentive BC.

Part 4: Other Budget Priorities

Pacific Gateway Investments

A submission was received from the Urban Development Institute discussing the impact of the Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy on urban development. The Institute expressed concern that the strategy will be a serious impediment to development since each parcel of land is assigned a regional land use designation – in addition to existing municipal zoning. This regional land use designation would need to be changed in order to proceed with development for any other use. The Committee heard how this adds another layer of land use planning, which will impose greater costs and uncertainty on developers. The Institute was also concerned that the Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy could potentially limit growth of the Pacific Gateway by preventing additional industrial lands near the Delta Port from being developed.

Provincial Tourism Marketing Organization

The Committee received submissions from tourism associations, businesses, and citizens from across the province on the need for a provincial tourism marketing organization with secure funding. In order to attract travel to BC destinations, from both within and outside the province, it was suggested that BC create a new tourism marketing organization. Submissions stressed that the organization should be industry-led. Here is a small sample of what we heard:

> *"Marketing – the key for us on a provincial scale is to make sure we've got a provincial marketing regime that the industry can be part of and that government can support."* (Stephen Regan, Council of Tourism Associations of British Columbia, Richmond public hearing)

> *"Stable and predictable tourism funding is a key part of our local economy. The funding environment for destination marketing has changed significantly since the introduction of the HST and the restructuring of Tourism BC."* (Sasha Angus, Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce, Victoria public hearing)

> *"We're looking for an industry-led, formula-funded organization that is independent of political-type interference, where it's an industry-led marketing decision based on where to spend money and how much to spend in certain markets and so forth. We think these should be private sector decisions."* (Patrick Corbett, Hills Health Ranch, Williams Lake public hearing)

> *"Tourism and eco-tourism can and should be developed. BC has been poor over the past eight years in large marketing programs related to BC Tourism compared to previous decades."* (Paul Keenleyside, Burnaby, On-line survey)

BC Airports Business Development Consortium

Representatives for YVR, Canada's second largest airport, presented at the Surrey public hearing. The presentation from the Vancouver Airport Authority stressed the need to make Vancouver the premier gateway to the Asia Pacific region for flights to and from the Americas and, more generally, to promote BC as a destination of choice for global tourists and business. In particular, the Committee

heard a proposal for a joint BC airport marketing initiative, whereby BC airports would work collaboratively with regional economic development agencies and with the Province to enhance marketing efforts for passenger and cargo air services, particularly with Asia. Under this proposal, which has a proposed start date of April 2012, YVR will contribute $1 million per year to this three-year initiative and participating airports will collectively provide $200,000 per year for three years. It was requested that the Province provide $1 million annually for three years to support this business development consortium.

Ultimate Limitation Period

Under the *Limitation Act*, the civil liability of licensed professional engineers or geoscientists, architects, dentists, or accountants extends 30 years beyond discovery of the alleged fault. Representatives of these professions informed the Committee about the challenges posed by this provision. Lowering the limitation period from 30 to ten years, it was noted, would reduce personal risks to individuals, increase efficiencies, and enhance the competitiveness of BC professionals vis-à-vis other jurisdictions. Included below are some quotes on this topic:

> "*Quite simply, the provincial government should review liability legislation and the current application of the ultimate limitation period and reduce it from 30 years to ten years. … BC has an ultimate limitation period that is in need of reform. The 30-year time frame is out of sync with other jurisdictions. Alberta has a ten-year period, and Ontario and Saskatchewan have 15.*" (Richard Rees, Institute of Chartered Accountants of British Columbia, Vancouver public hearing)
>
> "*To strengthen the economy and help create jobs, the BC government should modernize the Limitation Act and reduce the ultimate limitation period from 30 years to 10 years.*" (Doug Hinton, Consulting Engineers of British Columbia, Vancouver public hearing)
>
> "*Reducing the ultimate limitation period would resolve differences in risks between dentists and physicians and would greatly enhance the efficiency of dental resources in BC.*" (Hank Klein, BC Dental Association, Surrey public hearing)

Pooled Registered Pension Plan

The future pension needs of British Columbians were mentioned during the consultation process. Specific support was given for the proposal to establish a Pooled Registered Pension Plan (PRPP) for private sector employees. In particular, it was suggested that both levels of government ensure that all participants in the plan have the same opportunities to accumulate savings and make withdrawals in retirement; that the regulatory regime be efficient and not impose undue burden on employers and administrators; and that PRPP regulations be harmonized across the country. Here are some of the comments on this topic:

> "*We are supportive of the overall objective to provide an accessible, straightforward, low-cost, and easy-to-use pension plan that takes advantages of the benefits from the pooling of resources and professionally-managed funds for the benefit of Canadians. The public policy objective of the PRPP is to expand the retirement coverage of individuals who currently do not participate in a pension plan, particularly the*

self-employed and employees of small businesses." (Terry Campbell, Canadian Bankers Association, Written submission)

"Canada's life and health insurance companies strongly recommend that the Province enact measures to facilitate the provision of PRPPs … that would be available to all BC employers, particularly smaller businesses, and the self-employed, thus vastly improving access to a pension plan for British Columbians." (Frank Swedlove, Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association Inc., Written submission)

"I believe that one of the most important things that needs to happen is a much better retirement plan. CPP and OAS are not sufficient and too many people don't have the financial skills and/or the money to save enough in an RRSP or TFSA." (Jaap Siekman, Surrey, On-line survey)

National Securities Regulator

The Committee received a submission from the Canadian Bankers Association concerning the creation of a national securities regulator. The Association expressed its belief that a single securities regulator will attract investment, improve investor protection, and promote confidence in Canada's capital markets to the benefit of all Canadians. The Province was encouraged to support the federal government in its efforts to create a national securities regulator.

Medical Student Residency Positions

This year, the Committee again received a submission from the Society of Canadians Studying Medicine Abroad of BC. The Society's major concern is that the current supply of residency positions is preventing BC medical students studying in other countries from completing their medical education in their home province. The submission identified creating up to 60 more residency positions as a spending priority to provide the opportunity for students wanting to work in British Columbia.

Recommendations

In the following list, recommendation 68 is identified with an asterisk as needing immediate consideration by government. The other recommendations should be considered as budget conditions permit.

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Other Budget Priorities

68. Work with UBCM to ensure a conflict resolution mechanism is in place to protect the province's investments in the Pacific Gateway.*

69. Establish an industry-led provincial tourism organization which has an identifiable and secure source of funding.

70. To promote tourism and support the BC airports business development consortium in its three year plan.

71. Shorten the ultimate limitation period of civil liability for professionals (e.g. chartered accountants, engineers, dentists, and local government) from 30 to 10 years.

72. Support the creation of a Pooled Registered Pension Plan.

73. Encourage the federal government to have a National Securities Regulator.

74. Revise policies that make it difficult for students from BC studying medicine abroad to apply for residency positions immediately upon graduation from medical school; and ensure that admission to residency positions through UBC is based solely on merit.

75. Fund an additional 20 residency positions per year to enable British Columbians who have attended medical school abroad to complete their medical education in BC.

Summary of Recommendations

The following is a list of the 75 recommendations submitted by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services. The recommendations numbered 1-6, 12-13, 20, 37, 43-45, 48, 52-54, 64-65, and 68 are identified with an asterisk as needing immediate consideration by government. The other recommendations should be considered as budget conditions permit.

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Streamlining Permitting Processes and Regulations

1. Develop and implement an effective, efficient, and transparent permitting review process, and ensure that government agencies have sufficient resources.*
2. Provide more certainty to business applicants about what is expected from them with regard to First Nations consultations and clarify what government takes responsibility for.*
3. Consider synchronizing Alberta and BC trucking regulations to permit wide and heavier loads (e.g. axle weights) and improve wait times for issuing permits.*

Bridging the Skills Gap

4. Work with all sectors and the Industry Training Authority to enhance and target apprenticeship opportunities.*
5. Emphasize the development of innovative programs with high schools, colleges, industry, and labour that can successfully recruit and train students who may not be able to finish high school requirements for trades training in a traditional system; and increase efforts in trades training for women, Aboriginal people, older and disabled workers.*
6. In recognition of the impending shortage of educated and skilled workers, work with industries in the Northeast and Northwest regions, and regional colleges to work effectively together to ensure there is accurate and well-publicized local market information for young people and flexible, responsive training programs at a cost students can afford.*
7. Finance a capital campaign in partnership with resource-based industries specifically targeted at the colleges with trades programs to ensure that graduates are trained on state-of-the-art industrial equipment and that they graduate work-ready and productivity-ready.
8. Negotiate with the federal government to expand the Provincial Nominee Program to meet the province's labour market demands.
9. Provide core funding to the Northwest Community College's award-winning School of Exploration and Mining program.
10. Provide funding for skilled regional geologists to allow them to carry out fieldwork for the development of new mining opportunities.
11. Maintain adequate funding for Geoscience BC.

Investing in Northern Development

12. Ask BC Hydro to conduct negotiations with the private sector and to consult with local residents on the possible extension of the Northwest Transmission Line north from Bob Quinn Lake.*
13. Review ALR boundaries and give consideration to removing land that is not fit for agriculture, particularly in rural regions of the province.*
14. Develop rail transportation and supply chain infrastructure to enhance export capacities for port terminals in the northwest and in the lower mainland, particularly for metallurgical coal.
15. Develop an industry-supported centre line road that would reduce the time to travel into the centre of the Horn River development by 1.5 hours, therefore eliminating the need for operating some live-in construction camps.
16. Remove an appropriate amount of land from the Agricultural Land Reserve so that Fort Nelson can expand its residential land base to accommodate the growth pressure demands of developing the Horn River, Liard, and Cordova shale gas basins.
17. Initiate a Fair Share program in the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality equivalent to the existing Fair Share program in the Peace River Regional District.
18. In collaboration with industry, First Nations, and the regional municipality, develop a regional economic strategy and implementation plan with ongoing monitoring for the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality.
19. In recognition of the pressures on public services from a rapidly expanding economy, support the development of a strategy for meeting public service needs in Fort Nelson, such as health, education and safety.

Promoting BC Agriculture

20. Provide support for a branding program for BC agricultural products, as recommended in the BC Agriculture Plan.*
21. Reinstate the Buy BC program; ensure the BC School Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program is available throughout the province.
22. Provide regular, multi-year funding for inter-ministry invasive-species programs and habitat conservation and restoration, including those administered through regional weed committees.

Maintaining Health Care

23. Consider providing funding for the Alzheimer Society's First Link program and the Acquired Brain Injury and Innovation Fund.
24. Increase homecare services to save hospital costs as these services are less expensive than hospital beds.
25. Acknowledge the importance of end-of-life services within the medical care structure and provide equitable support to in-home hospice care, hospice houses and palliative care facilities across the province, recognizing the valuable contributions made by volunteers in this area.
26. Provide better PharmaCare through pricing reform for generic drugs.

27. Utilize fully the expertise and scope of practice of all health care professionals – including nurse practitioners – around the province, particularly in rural BC.

28. Work with the federal government to establish an effective elder abuse program.

Funding K-12 Education

29. Support the Ministry of Education and work with stakeholders to revamp the current funding formula.

30. Provide stable and predictable funding for school districts and continue to restore the K-12 annual facilities grant.

31. Review the capital funding process, particularly for high-growth school districts.

32. Continue to work with partners like Science World to promote science and technology education programs, such as the successful BC PALS program.

33. Review the Community Link program and consider moving to a needs-based funding formula for school districts.

34. Support the establishment of regional stakeholder tables to work with the Ministry of Education to identify priorities within school districts to deal with special needs students.

35. Improve resourcing to address any delays for early intervention therapy and autism services in order to facilitate the transition of children with special needs into the K-12 system.

36. Consider the Windsor House proposal as a pilot project for selected schools to capitalize on personalized learning for all students in the school system.

Strengthening Post-secondary Education

37. Review the application of accounting standards to universities and colleges in order to arrive at a satisfactory solution, since existing policy denies post-secondary institutions the opportunity to access outside capital and to manage their budgets, including surpluses.*

38. Compile a province-wide inventory of current and future maintenance needs for post-secondary infrastructure and develop a realistic plan to fund the Annual Capital Allowance.

39. Recommit to the Memorandum of Understanding signed with SFU and the Province in 2006 to double the size of SFU Surrey from 2,500 FTEs to 5,000 student FTEs.

40. Continue to fund graduate seats and to support a BC graduate fellowship program in order to attract and retain graduate students in the province.

41. Lower student loan interest rates to the same national ranking as BC tuition fees – i.e. middle of the pack.

42. Establish a provincial system of upfront needs-based grants to ensure success for students at all socioeconomic levels.

Resourcing Community Services

43. Expedite the review of Community Living BC and be prepared to invest as appropriate; and continue to improve planning and services for youth and adults with special needs who are in transition or whose families are in transition.*

44. Support the development of a full-cost and sustainable funding model for community-based employment service programs that deliver services on behalf of government.*

45. Give consideration to improving how community gaming grants are distributed, in recognition of the valuable services of non-profit and volunteer organizations.*

46. Recognize the economic benefits of a vibrant arts and culture sector.

47. In conjunction with the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, develop a long-term capacity fund and implement a coordinated strategy for Aboriginal people living off reserve.

Enhancing Court Services

48. Invest in legal information outreach workers as these non-lawyers can help court users navigate the justice system in a cost-effective way.*

49. Review funding for the Ministry of Attorney General to address clogged courtrooms, a shortage of judges, prosecutors, and courthouse staff.

50. Review legal aid services to ensure adequate assistance for citizens who suffer from mental illness, including cognitive impairment and dementia.

51. Examine funding options for the province's 60 restorative justice programs, including the Alberta model, as these programs result in significant cost savings.

Staying the Course

52. Reaffirm the commitment to balance the provincial budget by the 2013/14 fiscal year, and maintain the Province's triple-A credit rating.*

53. Continue to maintain the province's debt-to-GDP ratio at less than 20 percent.*

54. Continue to reduce government regulation and red tape.*

Revising Tax Policy

55. Complete the transition from HST to PST as soon as responsibly possible.

56. Make HST transitional rules available to industry as soon as possible; remove the PST portion of the HST immediately on all new homes, including second homes.

57. Strike a stakeholder working group to look at the advisability of mid-term opportunities to modernize and streamline the PST.

58. Continue to work with local governments to bring commercial and industrial tax rates into line with other Canadian jurisdictions to ensure BC remains competitive, and work with local governments and the UBCM to find alternative ways for local government to raise revenue.

59. Cap the carbon tax at the rate as of July 2, 2012.

60. Address the inequity for BC cement producers arising from imported cement not being subject to a carbon tax.

61. Review the impacts of the carbon tax on all business sectors and develop a strategy to keep BC businesses competitive with other jurisdictions.

62. Consider immediate carbon tax exclusions for agriculture, including the greenhouse sector, and public institutions.

63. Stop further expenditures on the development of cap and trade until the province has sufficient trading partners to trade with.

64. Maintain the commitment to eliminate the aviation fuel tax by April 2012.*

65. Revise Section 3 of the Ports Property Tax Act to extend the property tax rate cap on designated port facilities beyond the 2018 taxation year – for an additional 30 years.*

66. Exempt farm improvements at 87.5 percent of assessed value, or $50,000, whichever is greater.

67. Extend the DAVE credit to post production activities and include writer fees as eligible labour expenditures under Film Incentive BC.

Other Budget Priorities

68. Work with UBCM to ensure a conflict resolution mechanism is in place to protect the province's investments in the Pacific Gateway.*

69. Establish an industry-led provincial tourism organization which has an identifiable and secure source of funding.

70. To promote tourism and support the BC airports business development consortium in its three year plan.

71. Shorten the ultimate limitation period of civil liability for professionals (e.g. chartered accountants, engineers, dentists, and local government) from 30 to 10 years.

72. Support the creation of a Pooled Registered Pension Plan.

73. Encourage the federal government to have a National Securities Regulator.

74. Revise policies that make it difficult for students from BC studying medicine abroad to apply for residency positions immediately upon graduation from medical school; and ensure that admission to residency positions through UBC is based solely on merit.

75. Fund an additional 20 residency positions per year to enable British Columbians who have attended medical school abroad to complete their medical education in BC.

Appendix A: Public Hearings Witness List

Abbotsford Community Services, Nadine Power, Rod Santiago, 12-Oct-11 (Chilliwack)

Ad Hoc Committee on Funding for Surrey Schools, Jordan Malcolm, Jessie Stromberg-Smith, Linda Stromberg, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

AiMHi - Prince George Association for Community Living, Alain LeFebvre, Rory Summers, 20-Sep-11 (Prince George)

Alzheimer Society of British Columbia, Jean Blake, Barbara Lindsay, Jim Mann, 12-Oct-11 (Chilliwack)

AMS Student Society of UBC Vancouver, Katherine Tyson, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Animal Defence and AV-V Society of British Columbia, John Pranger, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Anspayaxw Development Ltd., Maxwell Stevens, Lorne Wilson, 20-Sep-11 (Smithers)

ASPECT, Norma Strachan, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

A.J. Aspinall, 21-Sep-11 (Kamloops)

Association for Mineral Exploration British Columbia, Rick Conte, Gavin Dirom, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Association of Book Publishers of B.C., Robert Ballantyne, Margaret Reynolds, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

B. C. Association of Farmers' Markets, Jon Bell, Elizabeth Quinn, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

B.C. School Trustees Association, Michael McEvoy, Stephen Hansen, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

B.C. Association for Community Living, Faith Bodnar, Annette Delaplace, Kathleen Moore, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

B.C. Citizens for Green Energy, David Field, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

B.C. Community Living Action Group, Anita Dadson, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

B.C. Government and Service Employees Union, Michael Eso, Darryl Walker, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

B.C. Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association, Jack Davidson, 12-Oct-11 (Chilliwack)

B.C. Society for Public Education, Catherine Evans, Helesia Luke, Cynthia Wong, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

B.C. Technology Industry Association, Bill Tam, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Ross Bannerman, 05-Oct-11 (Fort St. John)

BC Agriculture Council, Reg Ens, Garnet Etsell, 12-Oct-11 (Chilliwack)

BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, Paul Lacerte, Rikki Wylie, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

BC Colleges, Jim Reed, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

BC Dental Association, Jocelyn Johnston, Dr. Hank Klein, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

BC Food Processors Association, Dave Eto, Nico Human, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

BC Salmon Farmers Association, Mary Ellen Walling, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

BC Sustainable Energy Association, Guy Dauncey, Tom Hackney, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

Better Pharmacare Coalition, Rennie Hoffman, Cheryl Koehn, 12-Oct-11 (Cranbrook)

Board of Education, School District No. 33 (Chilliwack), Ruth Wiebe, 12-Oct-11 (Chilliwack)

Board of Education, School District No. 38 (Richmond) on behalf of trustees, teachers, school administrators, unionized staff and parents, Donna Sargent, Al Klassen, Ross McLuskie, Monica Pamer, Byron Stevens, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Board of Education, School District No. 39 (Vancouver), Steve Cardwell, Patti Bacchus, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

BrainTrust Canada Association, Maribeth Friesen, Richard Ingram, Doug Rankmore, 13-Oct-11 (Kelowna)

Hector Bremner, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

British Columbia Association of Child Development and Intervention, Bruce Sandy, 12-Oct-11 (Chilliwack)

British Columbia Chamber of Commerce, Jon Garson, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

British Columbia Construction Association, Manley McLachlan, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

British Columbia Fruit Growers' Association, Glen Lucas, Joe Sardinha, 13-Oct-11 (Kelowna)

British Columbia Medical Association, Rob Hulyk, Dr. Nasir Jetha, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

British Columbia Real Estate Association, Robert Laing, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

British Columbia Teachers' Federation, Susan Lambert, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

British Columbia Trappers Association, Mike Morris, 20-Sep-11 (Prince George)

Marianne Brophy, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Guy Brown, 20-Sep-11 (Smithers)

Bulkley Valley Child Development Centre Society, Kerri Bassett-Kluss, 20-Sep-11 (Smithers)

Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion, Susan Anthony, Kathy Martin, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Business Council of British Columbia, Greg D'Avignon, Jock Finlayson, Ken Peacock, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Camosun College, Peter Lockie, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

Campbell River Teachers' Association, Neil Thompson, 22-Sep-11 (Courtenay)

Canada's Research-Based Pharmaceutical Companies (Rx&D), BC Regional Committee, Bob Dawson, Peter Simpson, Shiera Stuart, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Canadian Bar Association, B.C. Branch, Sharon Matthews, Caroline Nevin, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Shachi Kurl, Nicole Nash, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Canadian Federation of Students, BC Office, Ian Boyko, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Canadian Home Builders' Association - Rocky Mountain, Brian Charlton, Mike Delich, 12-Oct-11 (Cranbrook)

Canadian Home Builders' Association of British Columbia, M.J. Whitemarsh, 12-Oct-11 (Chilliwack)

Canadian Lactation Consultants Association, Jean Kouba, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Canadian Media Production Association - BC Producers' Branch, Rob Bromley, Brian Hamilton, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Canadian Mental Health Association, Kelowna and District Branch, Shelagh Turner, 13-Oct-11 (Kelowna)

Canadian Sport Centre Pacific, Wendy Pattenden, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Canadian Taxpayers Federation, Jordan Bateman, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Capilano University Students Union, David Clarkson, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Capilano University Students Union, Brandon Hofmarks, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Cariboo Regional District, Janis Bell, Al Richmond, 21-Sep-11 (Williams Lake)

Bill Carruthers, 21-Sep-11 (Williams Lake)

Cement Association of Canada, Michael McSweeney, 21-Sep-11 (Kamloops)

Cement Association of Canada, David Hoff, 21-Sep-11 (Kamloops)

Central Okanagan Child Development Association, Wendy Falkowski, Sherry Greenlay, Terri Nakayama, 13-Oct-11 (Kelowna)

CHC Helicopter, James Cantwell, Michael Nagel, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Child Development Centre of Prince George and District Association, Darrell Roze, 20-Sep-11 (Prince George)

Chilliwack Chamber of Commerce, Jason Lum, 12-Oct-11 (Chilliwack)

Robert Chomiak, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Citizens for Agricultural Land Reform, Paul Gevatkoff, Dan McLeod, Rick Pavlis, 05-Oct-11 (Dawson Creek)

City of Cranbrook, Mayor Scott Manjak, 12-Oct-11 (Cranbrook)

City of Fort St. John, Mayor Bruce Lantz, 05-Oct-11 (Fort St. John)

City of Prince George, Garth Frizzell, Mayor Dan Rogers, 20-Sep-11 (Prince George)

City of Williams Lake, Mayor Kerry Cook, 21-Sep-11 (Williams Lake)

Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C., Sharon Gregson, Mab Oloman, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Coast Forest Products Association, Rick Jeffery, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

College of New Caledonia, Randall Heidt, Robert Murray, 20-Sep-11 (Prince George)

College of the Rockies Faculty Association, Leslie Molnar, 12-Oct-11 (Cranbrook)

Community Connections Society of Southeast BC, Gwen Noble, Patricia Whalen, 12-Oct-11 (Cranbrook)

Comox District Teachers' Association, Steve Stanley, 22-Sep-11 (Courtenay)

Comox Valley Child Development Association, Lorraine Aitken, 22-Sep-11 (Courtenay)

Comox Valley Hospice Society, Terri Odeneal, 22-Sep-11 (Courtenay)

Conayt Friendship Centre, George Girouard, 21-Sep-11 (Kamloops)

Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia, Robert Clift, Dr. David Mirhady, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Consulting Engineers of British Columbia, Neil Cumming, Steve Flee, Doug Hinton, Glenn Martin, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Cranbrook and District Chamber of Commerce, Sean Campbell, Jeanette Sissons, 12-Oct-11 (Cranbrook)

David Suzuki Foundation, Ian Bruce, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Christoph Dietzfelbinger, 20-Sep-11 (Smithers)

Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre Society, Mel Bazil, 20-Sep-11 (Smithers)

East Kootenay Invasive Plant Council, Chris Bosman, Sue Crowley, Marty Hafke, 12-Oct-11 (Cranbrook)

Elders Council for Parks in BC, Colin Campbell, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

Emily Carr Students' Union, Samanth Lefort, Karen Whistler, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Energy Services B.C., Laurie Dolan, 19-Sep-11 (Fort Nelson)

Faculty Association of the College of New Caledonia, Jan Mastromatteo, David Rourke, 20-Sep-11 (Prince George)

Federation of Community Social Services of B.C., Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC, Dr. George Davison, Cindy Oliver, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, Dr. John Millar, Adrienne Montaini, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Fort Nelson and District Chamber of Commerce, David Milner, Bev Vandersteen, 19-Sep-11 (Fort Nelson)

Fort Nelson Hospital Foundation, Carla Peace, 19-Sep-11 (Fort Nelson)

Fort St. John and District Chamber of Commerce, Andrew Tylosky, 05-Oct-11 (Fort St. John)

FortisBC, David Bodnar, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Fraser Basin Council, David Marshall, Bob Purdy, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Fraser Valley Real Estate Board, Jorda Maisey, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Dr. Peter Fry, 12-Oct-11 (Chilliwack)

Pamela Gardner, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Genome British Columbia, Suzanne Gill, Alan Winter, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Marilyn George, 20-Sep-11 (Smithers)

Geoscience BC, Dr. 'Lyn Anglin, 22-Sep-11 (Courtenay)

Dr. Mychael Gleeson, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Greater Vancouver Alliance for Arts and Culture, Amir Ali Alibhai, Nancy Noble, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce, Sasha Angus, Bruce Carter, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

Guide Outfitters Association of B.C., Scott Ellis, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Ivan Habel, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

Meredith Hamstead, 12-Oct-11 (Cranbrook)

Healing Journey Counselling Services, Azima Buell, 22-Sep-11 (Courtenay)

Heritage BC, Rick Goodacre, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

High Road Services Society, Dana Gorbahn, 20-Sep-11 (Smithers)

Hills Health and Guest Ranch Ltd., Patrick Corbett, 21-Sep-11 (Williams Lake)

Barbara Hobson, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Horn River Basin Producers Group, Kellen Foreman, 19-Sep-11 (Fort Nelson)

Ethan Huberman, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Imperial Metals Corp., Byng Giraud, 12-Oct-11 (Cranbrook)

Initiatives Prince George Development Corporation, Tim McEwan, 20-Sep-11 (Prince George)

In-SHUCK-ch Nation, Eppa (Gerard Peters), David Skerik, 12-Oct-11 (Chilliwack)

Institute of Chartered Accountants of B.C., Lou Boggio, Richard Rees, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Insurance Bureau of Canada, Serge Corbeil, Lindsay Olson, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Interior Indian Friendship Society, Gerri Collins, 21-Sep-11 (Kamloops)

Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan, Tangie Genshorek, 21-Sep-11 (Kamloops)

Kelowna Alternator Centre for Contemporary Art, Heather Martin, 13-Oct-11 (Kelowna)

Kelowna Chamber of Commerce, Bryn Gilbert, 13-Oct-11 (Kelowna)

Kelowna Community Food Bank, Mark Abrams, Lenetta Thordarson, 13-Oct-11 (Kelowna)

Kelowna Joint Water Committee, Bob Hrasko, Graeme James, 13-Oct-11 (Kelowna)

Ki-Low-Na Friendship Centre, Tanya Gregoire, 13-Oct-11 (Kelowna)

Kitimat Child Development Centre Association, Margaret Warcup, 20-Sep-11 (Smithers)

Kitimat Health Advocacy Group, Rob Goffinet, 20-Sep-11 (Smithers)

Wes Kmet, 13-Oct-11 (Kelowna)

Kwantlen Faculty Association, Bob Davis, Phillip Legg, Joel Murray, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Arnor Larson, 12-Oct-11 (Cranbrook)

Fred Legace, 21-Sep-11 (Kamloops)

Legal Services Society, Mark Benton, 22-Sep-11 (Courtenay)

Legislated Into Poverty Society, Gerry Goedhart, Teal Quin, 21-Sep-11 (Kamloops)

Living Rivers Trust, David Marshall, Terry Tebb, John Woodward, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Rosemary McKenzie, 20-Sep-11 (Smithers)

Mining Association of British Columbia, Ben Chalmers, John McManus, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Mission Self Advocacy Group, Bryce Schaufelberger, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Moms on the Move, Dawn Steele, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Motion Picture Production Industry Association of B.C., Menashe Arbel, Brian Hamilton, Peter Leitch, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Cameron Muir, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Music B.C., Bob D'Eith, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Nanaimo District Teachers' Association, Derek DeGear, 22-Sep-11 (Courtenay)

New Car Dealers Association of B.C., Blair Qualey, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

New Car Dealers Association of B.C., Jim Inkster, 05-Oct-11 (Dawson Creek)

North Peace Justice Society, Michelle Laboucane, 05-Oct-11 (Fort St. John)

Alison Norman, 20-Sep-11 (Smithers)

Cory Norman, 20-Sep-11 (Smithers)

North Island College Faculty Association, Shirley Ackland, 22-Sep-11 (Courtenay)

North Peace Seniors Housing Society, Marion Ewasiuk, Stella Hamilton, Gail Weber, 05-Oct-11 (Fort St. John)

Northern Rockies Regional Municipality, Colin Griffith, Mayor Bill Streeper, 19-Sep-11 (Fort Nelson)

Northern Rockies Seniors Society, Shannon Cooper, Carol Seidel, 19-Sep-11 (Fort Nelson)

Northwest Community College, Dave O'Leary, 20-Sep-11 (Smithers)

David Noshad, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Okanagan College, Lance Kayfish, 13-Oct-11 (Kelowna)

Okanagan College, Jim Hamilton, 13-Oct-11 (Kelowna)

Okanagan Kootenay Cherry Growers Association, Christine Dendy, David Stirling, 13-Oct-11 (Kelowna)

ORCA Children's Advocacy Centre Society, Fred Ford, 22-Sep-11 (Courtenay)

Roland Orfaly, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

PacificSport Okanagan, Doug Nicholas, 13-Oct-11 (Kelowna)

PacificSport Regional Centre Vancouver Island, Drew Cooper, 22-Sep-11 (Courtenay)

PacificSport Regional Sport Centre Northern B.C., Anne Pousette, 20-Sep-11 (Prince George)

Pembina Institute, Matt Horne, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Lynn Perrin, 12-Oct-11 (Chilliwack)

Prince George Chamber of Commerce, Derek Dougherty, Dr. Bill McGill, Bill Phillips, 20-Sep-11 (Prince George)

Prince Rupert and District Teachers' Union, Joanna Larson, 05-Oct-11 (Prince Rupert)

Private Forest Landowners Association, Rod Bealing, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

ProArt Alliance of Greater Victoria, Peter Sandmark, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

Progressive Contractors Association of Canada, Paul de Jong, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Quesnel and District Child Development Centre Association, Kurt Pedersen, 20-Sep-11 (Prince George)

Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver, Harriet Permut, Jim Woolsey, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Jenny Reid, 05-Oct-11 (Prince Rupert)

Resorts of the Canadian Rockies, Andy Cohen, 12-Oct-11 (Cranbrook)

Retail Council of Canada and Shelfspace - The Association for Retail Entrepreneurs, Shafiq Jamal, Mark Startup, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Tina Revai, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Richmond Society for Community Living, Gail Bains, Janice Barr, Bob Robertson, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Rick Hansen Foundation, Colin Ewart, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

Rick Hansen Institute, Mark Aston, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

Louisa Sanchez, 05-Oct-11 (Prince Rupert)

Randy Saugstad, 21-Sep-11 (Williams Lake)

Science World British Columbia, Bryan Tisdall, 12-Oct-11 (Chilliwack)

Selkirk College, Barry Auliffe, Mike Dion, 22-Sep-11 (Nelson)

Selkirk College Students' Union, Zachary Crispin, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Seniors Advisory Council of Williams Lake and Area, Audrey MacLise, 21-Sep-11 (Williams Lake)

Simon Fraser University, Joanne Curry, Wilf Hurd, Andrew Petter, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Gail Simpson, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

Smithers District Chamber of Commerce, George Whitehead, 20-Sep-11 (Smithers)

Smithers Exploration Group, Christine Ogryzlo, 20-Sep-11 (Smithers)

Society for the Advancement of Non-coercive Education, Brenda Birch, Davide Gagnon, 21-Sep-11 (Kamloops)

Sport BC, Tim Gayda, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Dr. John Stainer, 19-Sep-11 (Fort Nelson)

Students Union of Vancouver Community College, Carolyn Ehman, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Sun Peaks Mountain Resort Municipality, Mayor Al Raine, 21-Sep-11 (Kamloops)

Surrey Board of Trade, Anita Huberman, Eric Wilson, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Surrey Urban Mission, Jonquil Hallgate, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Tembec Industries Inc., Andrew McCuaig, Chris Stagg, 12-Oct-11 (Cranbrook)

Terrace and District Chamber of Commerce, Carol Fielding, 22-Sep-11 (Terrace)

Terrace and District Community Services Society, Stacy Tyres, 22-Sep-11 (Terrace)

Terrace Kermode Friendship Centre, Kirby Azak, 22-Sep-11 (Terrace)

The Centre for Seniors Information, Brenda Prevost, 21-Sep-11 (Kamloops)

Thompson Rivers University, Karl deBruijn, Dr. Alan Shaver, 21-Sep-11 (Kamloops)

Thompson Rivers University Faculty Association, Jason Brown, 21-Sep-11 (Kamloops)

Thompson Rivers University Students Union, Jordan Harris, Alex McLellan, 21-Sep-11 (Kamloops)

Thompson Rivers University Williams Lake Campus, Shirley-Pat Gale, 21-Sep-11 (Williams Lake)

Thompson Rivers University, University and Employment Preparation, Doug Knowles, 21-Sep-11 (Kamloops)

Touchstone Family Association, Michael McCoy, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Tourism Industry Association of BC, Lana Denoni, Stephen Regan, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Tourism Richmond, Scott Johnson, Tracy Lakeman, 14-Oct-11 (Richmond)

Truck Loggers Association, Dave Lewis, 22-Sep-11 (Courtenay)

UBC Students' Union Okanagan, Kirk Chavaric, Neetu Garcha, 13-Oct-11 (Kelowna)

United for Public Education, Dylan Sherlock, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

University of Northern British Columbia, Dr. George Iwama, Nadia Nowak, 20-Sep-11 (Prince George)

University of the Fraser Valley, Dr. Mark Evered, Jackie Hogan, 12-Oct-11 (Chilliwack)

University of Victoria Students' Society, Tara Paterson, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

Vancouver Aboriginal Frendship Centre Society, Susan Tatoosh, 15-Sep-11 (Vancouver)

Vancouver Airport Authority, Tony Gugliotta, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Victoria Real Estate Board, Dennis Fimrite, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

Louella Vincent, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Ron Watson, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Western Canada Theatre; Kamloops Art Gallery; Kamloops Symphony, Jann Bailey, Kathy Humphreys, Lori Marchand, 21-Sep-11 (Kamloops)

Where's the Funding?!, Jaraad Marani, 07-Oct-11 (Victoria)

Williams Lake and District Chamber of Commerce, Roger Solly, 21-Sep-11 (Williams Lake)

Williams Lake Construction Association, Sue Zacharias, 21-Sep-11 (Williams Lake)

Williams Lake Student Council, Jessie Venos, 21-Sep-11 (Williams Lake)

WJ Sand and Gravel Ltd., Jim Campbell, 19-Sep-11 (Fort Nelson)

Steve Wood, 11-Oct-11 (Surrey)

Appendix B: Written Submissions

Accountability Council for Co-operative Education of BC, Norah McRae

Barbara Amboe

Laurajean Anderson

Arrowsmith Naturalists, David Hutchings

ArtsBC, Joan Richoz

Association for Community Education in BC (ACEbc), Don Reimer

Avanti Aerospace & Engineering Inc., Anthony Walls

BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, Kathryn Lacerte

BC Association of Family Resource Programs, Marianne Drew-Pennington

BC Association of Institutes and Universities, Ruth Wittenberg

BC Bison Association, Bill Bouffioux

BC Cattlemen's Association, Judy Guichon

BC First Nations Energy and Mining Council, Dave Porter

BC Games, Kelly Mann

BC Healthy Living Alliance, Brenda Bedford

BC Heritage Fairs Society, Tom Morton

BC Lodging and Campgrounds Association, Joss Penny

Board of Education, School District #36 (Surrey), Laurae McNally

Board of Education, School District #46 (Sunshine Coast), Silas White

Jack Borden

Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, Carrie Wagner-Miller

British Columbia Choral Federation, David Stewart

British Columbia Métis Federation, Keith Henry

British Columbia Pharmacy Association, Marnie Mitchell

British Columbia Wharf Operators' Association, Brad Eshleman

British Columbia Wine Institute, Miles Prodan

Arne Bryan

Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, David Collyer

Canadian Bankers Association, Terry Campbell

Canadian Diabetes Association, Peggy McFarland

Canadian Federation of University Women - BC Council, Susan Murphy

Canadian Home Builders' Association - Victoria, Casey Edge

Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association Inc., Frank Swedlove

Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, Peter Jeffrey

Canadian Union of Public Employees (BC Division), Barry O'Neill

Mike Carmichael

Andrew Carr

CGA-BC, Edward Downing

Chan Centre for the Performing Arts (UBC), Joyce Hinton

Tanya Clarmont

Clean Energy Association of BC, Paul Kariya

Community Family Link Society of British Columbia, B. Masako Stillwell

Comox Strathcona Regional Hospital District, Debra Oakman

Lyle Craver

Daw Holdings Ltd., Wm. Pekonen

Geoffrey Dean

Donna Denny

Diane Dillon

Nancy Dyer

Annette Edwards

Electric Mobility Canada, Al Cormier

Draysen Foreman

Terry Garratt

Udo Grady

Amanda Hengeveld

Imperial Oil Limited, T. G. Scott

Imperial Tobacco Canada, Penela Guy

Scott Jackson

Sheanna James

Charles Lazer

Lip Ying Buddy Lee

Margaret and Jim Little

Yvonne Lynch

Bruce Mack

Mackeno Ventures, Margaret Little

Ian Mackie

Richard Mark

Stan Matlock

Irene McCarthy

Doreen McIntyre

Keith McPherson

Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Committee - Bulkley, Brian Fuhr

Tony Merkin

Stew Miles

Mary Miller

Barry Moore

Ted Murray

Nanaimo Brain Injury Society, Mark Busby

Nanaimo Child Development Centre Society, Carol Webber

Nanaimo Duncan & District Labour Council, Ellen Oxman

Bryden Nelmes

Diane Nicholls

Julie Niebel

North Peace Rod and Gun Club, James Little

North Vancouver School District, Board of Education, PAC & Administrators, John Lewis, Franci Stratton, Cyndi Gerlach, Elizabeth Bell, and Bill Reid

Northern Society for Domestic Peace, Michelle Larstone

Okanagan College Faculty Association, Tim Walters

Holly Olson

Barry O'Neill

Pacific Rim Hospice Society, Kim Hoag

PacificSport Fraser Valley, Linda Palm

MB Page

Barb Paton

Peace River North Board of Education (School District #60), Gord Klassen

Alex Peter

Prince George Cantata Singers, Evelyn Lee

Prince Rupert Port Authority, Ken Veldman

Brendan Read

Research Universities' Council of British Columbia, Robin Ciceri

Richmond Teachers' Association, Al Klassen

Save Our Northern Seniors (SONS), Margaret Little

Bill Schram

Seton Portage Shalalth Chamber of Commerce, Dennis De Yagher

Joe Skrlac

Curtis Smecher

Society of Canadians Studying Medicine Abroad of BC, Andrew D. Thompson

Rafe Sunshine

Support Child Development Program, Wendy Steet

Teachers of Home Economics Specialist Association, Paula Aquino

Tradeworks Training Society, Ross Gentleman

Urban Development Institute - Pacific Region, Maureen Enser

Doreen van Stolk

Louise Vezina

Peter Weldon

West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund, Laura Track

West Coast Marine Bio-Processing Corp., Stefano Urbani

Amy Woodruffe

Ray Yee

Appendix C: On-line Survey Responses

Maleea Acker
Sarah Jane Adamson
Susan Aird
Amal Akouri
Jan Allan
Seneca Ambers
Amie Anderson
Jerry Archambault
Garry Arsenault
John Ashdown
Aaron Banks
Jennie Bartosik
Audra Bassari
Leila Baxter
BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, Rosy Dawn Steinhauer
Amir Behkish
Gail Bellward
Bob Benson
John Benson
Garry L. Bergquist
Jason Bertucci
Carly Bird
Chris Birkett
Leah Blackburn
Alison Bledsoe
Stephen Blumstein
Chris Bocking
Cara Borley
Shawn Boss
Claire Bouchard
Vanessa Boylan
Cathy Bradfield
Patrick Brady
Don Branch
Hector Bremner
Richard Brouwer
Alysha Brown
Bulkley Valley Community Arts Council, Miriam Colvin
Donna Bush
C. Bussey
Allan Byres
Jane Campbell
Maria Cargnelli
Cynthia Carlsen
Donna Carlson
George Carruthers
Brent Carson
Pam Carter
Cameron Cascon
Darlene Cave
Kenneth Chambers
Bob Chandler
Gord Chisholm
Nathaniel Christopher
Megan Clarkson
Tanya Clarmont
Warren Clarmont
Sylvia Dawne Cleland
Pamela Clermont
Melody Cleugh
Angelo Cocco
John Cockburn
Beth Collins
Laurel Collins
Shona Collison
Mickey Cook
Colleen Corder
Ross Coubrough
Lyle Craver
Creston Valley Early Childhood Development, Andrea Suprowich-Dirk
Cassandra Cruse
Linda Cummings
Marilyn Dahl
Kelly David
Colleen Davis
Monica De
Nicole Dean
Lorne DeGirolamo
Alisa Denduyf
Tony Des Lauriers
Daniel Deveau
Shellee DeVito
Sabrina Dey
Sabrina Dey
Kirsten Dibblee
Diane Dillon
Jim Dixon
Julie Donati
Danielle Donovan
Alexandra Doyle
Terry Duncan
David Dundee
Katherine Dunster
Sarah Dutsch
Betty-Jean Dziekan
Margot Edwards
Tara Ehrcke
Gilbert Elliot
Darrell Erhart
Kathy Esau
Michael Ewan
Fairfield Community Association of Victoria, Candace Negm
Ian Farthing
Steve Faulks
Penelope Fenske
Wayne Ferguson
Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group, Denyse Koo
Linda Ferris
Candace Fertile
A. Fire
Aird Flavelle
Teresa Ford
Jordan Fox
Karen Fox
Linda Fox
Liz Fox
Fraser Valley Real Estate Board, Merrylyn Jeffrey
Shauna Fraser
Wendi Galczik
Shannon Gallie
Brian Gavin
Paul Gevatkoff
Blair Gibney
A. Paul Gill
Ed Gilman
Calvin Ginther
Tammy Gizen
Dianne Goldberg
Karen Golden
Maria Gomes
Margidrivee Goodman
Corinne Goodwin
Naomi Graham
Janet Grant
Steven Greenfield
George Greenwood
Darren Gregory
Dmitri Grozenok
Sheila Gutsche
Jesse Guy
Richard Hancock

Tyrel Hansen
Mary Ann Harris
Brian Harrison
James Hart
Shane Hartman
Nicole Hawes
Robert Heard
Greg Henderson
Sara Henry
Daryl Hindley
Lloyd Hipson
Curtis Hobson
Laurel Hodgins
Ralph Hogg
Jen Holden
Kylye Holly
Anne Hooper-Johnston
Denise Houle
Dagmar Hughes
Wayne Hughes
Kari Hutchison
Daniel Iadarola
Clayton Ingram
Wade Ireland
Sue Irwin
Nicole Jackson
Carolyn Jerome
Samson John
Catriona Johnson
Chris Johnson
Darcey Johnson
Grace Johnston
Susan Johnston
Sheila Johnstone
Maryke Jones
Robyn Joyce
Valerie Keeler
Paul Keenleyside
Susan Keepng
Margaret Keigher
Graham Kelsey
Doug Kenmuir
Parveen Khtaria
Cheryl Killam
Kevin Kilpatrick
Lori King
Racelle Kooy
Kristi Korpella
Bev Kula
Michael La Framboise
Omeed Lakhani
Andrea Landry
Shirley Lang
Colleen Lanki
Casey Laven
Edward Lazenby
Patrick LeBlanc
Amanda Lee
Jamie Lee
Bev Leeder
Sheahan Letondre
Jean Lewin
Jamie Lewis
Margaret Little
Patti Logan
Peter Lomas
Andrew Lones
Kelly Lough
Len Lovering
Les Lowe
Jen Lucas
Ursula Lussin
Stephen MacGregor
Kimberly MacIntyre
Kathleen MacLauchlan
Luke MacNeil
April Macri
Grant Maddock
Susanna Magnusson
Bob Main
Joyce Mainland
Brenda Managh
Hetty Martin
Lindsey Martin
Anne Mayall
Gehard Maynard
Emily Mayne
Patricia McCarter
Shanahan McClure
Don McCullough
Lynne Marie McCullough
Leslie Mcgarry
Kera Mchugh
Alan McIntosh
Shawn McKean
Kevin McKee
M. McKenzie
Ken McLennan
Kent McLeod
Robert McRae
Jeanette Mercer
Lisa Mercure
Wendy Merkley
Joe Middleton
Mary Miles
C Millar
Mary Miller
Michelle Milne
Chris Monnon
David Moorthy
Howard Morgan
Barry Morris
Aimee Morry
Kristin Moser
Kelly Mould
Caroline Mufford
MYCHAEL Co., Dr. Mychael Gleeson
Cheryl Newman
Ellen Newman
Richard Newman
Julie Niebel
Holley Nielsen
Jennifer Nordahl
Jade Norton
Roger Nygren
Erik Oinonen
Erik Oinonen
David Olsen
Holly Olson
Kris Orchison
Ingrid Osadan
Francesca Osburn
Bob Ostle
Pacific Centre Family Services Association, Mitzi Dean
Pacifica Housing, Rachel Sadava
PacificSport Regional Sport Centre - Interior BC, Carolynn Boomer
Glenna Padley
Carolyn Pahl
Bruce Parisian
Ken Park
Ingrid Paterson
Barb Paton
Cathy Paton
Colleen Patterson
Sherry Patterson
Cora Pavlis
Duncan Pavlis
Daniel Pelletier
Katrina Per
Andrina Perry
Rodney Pickford
Tamara Piekaar
Tim Pincin
Jeff Pitzel
Port Alberni Friendship Center, Cyndi Stevens
Samantha Pothier
Della Preston
Delwyn Preston
Kevin Preston
Pamela Preston

Fernande Quesnel
Ross H. Ranger
Susan Rankin
Charlene Ratzinger
April Reeve
Kyle Reeve
Stefanie Reeve
Kenneth Rigby
John Rigg
Aaron Riley
Donald Rinald
Roberta Robbins
Gina Robertson
Lee Robinson
Christine Rogers
Richard Rootes
Monika Rose
Julie Ross
June Ross
Rutland Senior Secondary School PAC, Tania Gustafson
Susan Ruzic
Geri Sands
Lisa Sarai
Kayla Schibli
Ronald Schlosberg
Rhonda Schmitz
Joshua Schofield
Dan Schrier
Clair Schuman
Swati Scott
Terence Searl
Sector Learning Solutions Inc, Gerry Brimacombe
David Selby
Barbara Selwood
Amber Sequin
Jordan Shade
Payal Shah
Laura Shaughnessy
Alisha Shea
Jaap Siekman
Barb Silverster
Nancy Sine
Niki Sinhart
Arlo Sjoberg
Danielle Smith
Donald Smith
Geraldine Smith
Joey Smith
Karen Smith
Tami Smith-Daniels
John Soanes
South Cariboo Chamber of Commerce, Rick Takagi
Sparwood Early Childhood Development Committee, Jackie Carpenter
Margot Staples
Harvey Stark
Jennah Stavroff
Richard Stern
David Stewart
Alexandria Stuart
Esther Sustersich
Wendy Swain
Richard M. Tatomir
James Taylor
Rhoda Taylor
Elin Tayyar
Arti Tewari
Norma Thompson
Normagene Thompson
Sheryl Thompson
Cheryl Thorpe
Caddie TKenye
Tradeworks Training Society, Ross Gentleman
Peter Tulumello
Peggy-Sue Turner
Marek Tyler
Vasant Vancoakhani
Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society, Susan Tatoosh
Vancouver Island Federation of Hospices, Wendy Pratt
Sudu Vatagoda
Louise Vezina
Victoria Native Friendship Centre, Debora Abood
Kate Vincent
Lisa Vlake
Wachiay Friendship Centre Society, Roger Kishi
Kristine Walker
Tamara Wallace
Barbara Warren
Larry Weeks
Gordon Weighill
Jim Wesson
Melia Whyte
Jennifer Wickham
Charmaine Williams
Kimberly Williams
Ray Williams
Raymond Williams
Ed Willis
Diana Wilson
Kathleen Wilson
Maiya Wolfe
Tracie Woodhams
Jennifer Wooffinden
Martin Wyant
Michelle Yalowega
Caroline Yeend
Debra Yendall
Debra Yendall
Pat Zander
Chri Zazula
Jamin Zuroski